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AGNES DE MANSFELDT

A HISTORICAL TALE.

BY

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BRUGES," "HIGHWAYS AND BYWAYS," &c. &c. &c.

"Manifold matters of recreation, policie, love adventures, &c., abundantlie administered; and all in the golden reigne of blessed Queen Elizabeth, the sweete floure of amiable virginitie."—*Epistle to Stow's Chronicle*.

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INTRODUCTORY.

HISTORICAL parallels, whether of persons or events, show generally more ingenuity than truth. They are seldom as instructive as they are amusing ; and are rarely turned to the good purposes of effective example. Few transactions in the history of any given nation resemble each other more than the Congress of Cologne, two centuries and a half ago, and the Conference of London in our own days ; both held for the special and final arrangement of the affairs of the Netherlands, and both so eminently insufficient for that great object.

It is only necessary to refer to the records of those almost interminable nego-

tiations to establish the general resemblance. The main difference is that Holland was then in the position which Belgium occupies now ; the very country which then laboured to throw off the yoke now striving to maintain the dominion—its people being so changed in character as to follow the example it then struggled against. It is certainly striking and singular that the modern King of Holland should stand precisely in the situation which the King of Spain occupied in the olden time, retarding and frustrating by self-willed intolerance the settlement which he knows and feels to be inevitable. It is not, indeed, on the same grounds which supported Philip II. that William I. takes his stand. And far be it from us to insinuate any general resemblance between the tyrant of old and the constitutional

monarch of to-day. It is only on the score of obstinate perseverance that the analogy exists ; religious fanaticism being mainly the basis of the one, and commercial selfishness of the other. As for all the minor details—the joint protection afforded by France and England to the newly-established state ; the refusal, by the rejected dynasty, to acknowledge its chief governor enthroned at Brussels ; the twenty-seven articles on the one hand and the twenty-four articles on the other ; the hollow arbitration of the emperor (Russia and Prussia did not then politically exist to form the trinity of despotism) ; the bad faith and jealousy of some governments ; and the tortuous shifts of diplomacy—they show a similitude so marvellous, that it seems as if the master spirits of this age were forced to model their course on the errors of one

which, in common cases, they no doubt abhor and despise.

All Europe was harrassed and convulsed by “the Dutch and Belgic question” of the sixteenth century. To bring it if possible to a termination by means of amicable discussion, commissioners were appointed by common consent, including many men of high rank and some of consummate talent: and this memorable congress assembled in the ancient city of Cologne, early in the spring of the year 1579.

The eminent persons composing the congress would have felt it little consistent with their dignity to come to the rendezvous in the unostentatious guise of modern statesmen. The spirit of the times is happily changed; and people are now rapidly losing the veneration for factitious display, which was one great

cause of the too-long admitted influence of rank whose chief claim to distinction was riches.

The important occasion we now allude to brought together three archbishops—two of them electors of the empire, and one the pope's nuncio—one bishop, two dukes, one count, various abbots, seigneurs, counsellors, intendants, jurisconsults and secretaries ; besides a crowd of unofficial individuals, attracted to the scene and illegitimate actors in it, for the purposes of the many princes, potentates, and pretenders whose interests were involved in the great questions to be debated.

Considerable magnificence was displayed by this assemblage of functionaries. Their numerous followers and splendid retinues filled the houses of entertainment ; while the influx of visitors,

more or less connected with them, left little room, even in private mansions, for the casual travellers who resorted to the city during the long course of the negotiations. Cologne had rarely been the scene of such splendour, such debauchery, and such intrigue. And the long-past glories of Roman, Franc, and Hun, of emperors, kings, and conquerors were eclipsed and for awhile forgotten, in the extravagance of the epoch we describe.

But we trust our readers will not take the alarm, nor imagine that, under the guise of a historical tale, we are about to inflict on them a political romance. We disclaim all the awful pretensions implied in such an attempt; we disown all notion of making a story of past times a covert satire on those in which we live. If, indeed, in the course of our narrative

events of history invite remark, as the individuals we introduce require description, we shall not shrink—any more than on former occasions—from hazarding an opinion, albeit in opposition to some of those which are called “received” ones. But with regard to this diplomatic pantomime, so rich in tricks and transformations, so far from introducing it by design or meaning to dwell on it, we never should have mentioned it at all, had it not been in the midst of its gorgeous display that our heroine made her first appearance on the public scene of life, and that she owed to its records her introduction to the broad pages of history.

That the serious purpose of the congress might commence with suitable solemnity, and in the hope of frustrating the many sinister attempts which were at work to counteract its intended good

effects, the members unanimously agreed to proceed to business under the auspices of religion ; “beginning,” as one of the historians observes, “with God himself.” Prayers were put up to Heaven for divine assistance in the important task ; and, at the suggestion of Ghebhard Truchses, the Elector-archbishop of Cologne, a procession of the Sacred Host, and all its auxiliary pomps, was fixed on, as the first step in the mighty affair, it being however doubtful to the before-cited author whether the prince-prelate was “inspired by a wish for the public weal, or that it was a pretext of this personage, who assumed an appearance of piety, for better securing the archiepiscopal throne, the possession of which had been long disputed.”

The solution of this doubt may be found in the progress of our story, on which we forthwith proceed to enter.

AGNES DE MANSFELDT.

CHAPTER I.

IT was early morning, yet the whole population of Cologne and the surrounding neighbourhood was abroad, in the streets and squares of that most ancient city. It was working day, yet burgher and boor, artizan and peasant, had alike donned their sabbath attire, and shone forth in all the bravery of their picturesque costumes. It was April, scarcely April, that capricious month of smiles and tears, when the budding hopes of one hour are so often nipped by the next, and the young spring, like a new fledged bird, shrinks fluttering ere it trusts

itself on the expanse of time—yet the air was soft, and the sun as warm and bright as when it smiles on the gay groups of a summer fête. The bells from a hundred steeples rung forth joyous peals; culverins and falconets sent their voices out from every fort and bastion in the walled circle of two leagues, by which the city was girded. Bands of martial music tempered the discord by their melody; and sound, in all its wild varieties, thrilled confusedly through the air, and baffled the mimicry of the surrounding echoes.

While Heaven and man thus combined to do honour to the day, Heaven's fairest work, and man's brightest inspiration was not wanting, to throw a grace over the otherwise imperfect scene. Woman, in her most attractive forms, moved along the promenades, leaned from the windows, or stood on platforms, to gaze unobstructed at the spectacle below.

Of the many groups so placed, which caught the observation of the passers-by, and checked

their impatient longing for the appearance of the procession, one, which occupied the heavy sculptured balcony of a mansion fronting the church of St. Columba, was peculiarly attractive. It consisted of four females, young, lovely, and dressed in a fashion that bespoke them of high rank. He must have been indeed a stranger in Cologne, who did not know the residence of the bold Baron Conrad von Kriechlingen; while the inquisitive soon learned the names of the noble houses to which belonged the liveried varlets who lounged at the portal with those of the family. The still more curious quickly found out that with the baron's two daughters above, were their visitors, Anne, the youthful wife of John Casimir Duke of Saxe-Coburg, and Agnes, only daughter of John George late Count of Mansfeldt.

“And how, worthy and worshipful sir,” asked an old woman, of tottering gait and stooping figure, who plied closely with questions the pompous functionary who bore the title of ba-

ronial gate-opener to the family of Kriechlingen, “ how may the eyes that mark yon blooming group of young beauties, distinguish the matron from the maidens ; and then know one of the latter from the others ? ”

“ In good sooth, dame, ’twould seem as though some more than common motive spurred on your questionings ? Is it so ? ” said the concierge.

“ And what if it were, kind master ? ” replied the crone, with a keen and crafty tone of voice, that seemed at once to admit and justify an unacknowledged object. “ What if I *had* some cause beyond an old wife’s gossiping, for seeking to know the Duchess Anne from the fair virgins she consorts with ? ”

“ Oh, it is thus ? another suitor for the bounty of the generous Duchess Anne ; verily her fame for charity has travelled before her, albeit she came and stays here incognito ; and well needs her purse to be lined, if every twenty-four hours of her visit bring applicants in proportion to

the one day she has been in Cologne already. Good woman, I cannot be accessory to her highness's annoyance. I prithee, go thy ways, nor seek to interrupt the noble lady's pleasures by a suit that's out of season."

"And how know you, good sir, that the pleasures of the princess, aye, her very happiness and welfare, may not be at stake, may not depend on the receipt of this precious missive?"

As she uttered these words, the speaker drew from beneath her cloak a letter, which the porter instantly saw to be far different from the coarse texture and vulgar shape of a petition for alms. It was of coloured paper, tastefully folded, and tied with fantastic knots of ribbon, to one of which was attached a pendant seal, while it emitted a sweet odour that seemed much to sooth the rising asperity of the porter's feelings. An apparent accident, which happened at the moment, might perchance have had some mollifying influence of the same nature. A small leathern bag, fastened with a ring of wire,

dropped from the old woman's girdle, and its chink on the pavement sounded marvellously harmonious. The porter stooped to lift it up : and maugre a portly paunch, and the joint-stiffening action of sixty summers, he bent double, with a promptness not exceeded by the most supple examples of court prostration.

The old woman did not oppose him, but faintly laughed, as with a malicious triumph, while he raised his apoplectic face to a level with her own, (which, however, she instantly turned aside,) presenting her the bag at the same time, and puffing forth an apology in these terms—

“Respectable and well-born dame, I crave your pardon humbly, for my rude mistake and over-hasty speech. Aye, verily, are my eyes waxing old and dim, or I should easily have seen by your air and bearing, in despite of modest though by no means unbecoming attire—for, sooth to say, this bodice of orange-tawney kersey, with rabbit-skin trimmings goes well

with the shades of brown in this ingrain mantle and hood, and suits no doubt the features and complexion of the staid, yet, I warrant me, still comely wearer. Aye, easily should I have seen, but for this teasing rheum which mars my vision, that I spoke to the worthy wife or mother of some substantial citizen. Would it please you, good dame, to enter into my lodge here a bit, and look out unobstructed from the postern window on the great procession, which must even now have started from the palace, and will pass through our neighbourhood anon?"

The object of this courtesy seemed to take it all with a perfect business-like indifference, as though such sudden shifts of opinion and manners were familiar to her experience, and that their secret springs were not too deep for her philosophy.

"Good Master Porter," said she, moving under the porch the while, "you put me to shame by your civilities, for I cannot accept them; half, as it were, by reason of my own un-

worthiness, and the other half from the pressing necessity of others' concerns, which hurries me away. In a word, kind sir, will you undertake to deliver this letter into Duchess Anne's fair hands, secretly and quickly?"

"Why, for the slight service of passing on a letter, so complaisant and courteous as this seems to be," resumed the porter, watching keenly the movements of the crone, whose fingers leisurely undid the fastening of her money-bag, "for such a good turn, and all in the way of mine office, I would not willingly stand on punctilios of mere place. I think I might contrive to send the billet through the duchess's varlet yonder, to her highness's tire-woman, and so by toilette-time to-morrow into her own fair hand, or at least so place it that it should fall under her own bright eye."

"Kind thanks for your good offices," replied the old woman, coldly, while she replaced the purse in her girdle. "No, Master Porter, no. Such snail's-pace, round-about proceedings are

not of fitting gait for the rapid flow of hot, and youthful, and noble blood. And did such means suit the purpose of the princely I—would say the lordly, or needs let it be simply the well-born writer, for I would not willingly betray his noble confidence—the letter might have been delivered at the door of your lodge, by secretary or serving-man, and sent up through the beaten road of common correspondence. No, Master Porter, no! and good day to you."

"Nay, nay, go not away in pique or unkindness, good dame," said the porter, alarmed at the threatened loss of his vails, and laying a gentle hand on his companion's cloak, with a wheedling look and a forced chuckle, as he added, "by the bones of the eleven thousand! I wish to do the good turn you ask me. A prince did you not say, or at least a noble of note—eh? and—"

"Well then, at once, and without words," said his companion briskly, at the same time

placing a small gold piece in his palm, which surely had itched intensely during the previous colloquy, “at once and for all, will you or will you not put this letter into the hands of the duchess, now, at the instant?”

“Reckon on me, as soon as ever the procession passes,” whispered the porter, putting the letter between his doublet and pourpoint, and closing his fingers on the piece of gold.

“Good fellow, you know not the danger of delay, or you would not prose and chatter in this guise. There is another ducat to quicken your senses—now, on the instant, give the letter with your own hands, and remember! a keen eye is watching you. Here they come—farewell! we shall meet again.”

As these words were rapidly uttered, and while the speaker darted away in the crowd, with the activity of boyhood, and (as Karl Kreutzer, the conscientious porter, piously swore) with the suddenly-acquired height of well-grown manhood, he felt his breath to come

and go ; and his eyes swam, and his knees shook, for he thought that voice, air, and gesture were all supernaturally awful. A pang seemed shot through his heart, from the mere vicinage of the letter. To have relieved himself, he would have thrown it into the street, and the money along with it, had not a sudden throb of fear held one hand firm on the mysterious paper, and an occult instinct of avarice thrust the other into the deep, wide pocket of his crimson plush *pluderhosen*.

While he stood bewildered and uncertain, the loud crash of music and the chant of voices told him the procession was near at hand. The rush of people in all directions warned him of it in another sense. And the boisterous entreaties for admission into the lodge, from several persons who pushed towards the portal, were the completing proofs that he had no time to lose.

“ Do, good Master Karl ?”

“ Kind Karl, one place in the postern window !”

"Just enough room for this child, worthy Master Kreutzer!"

"'Tis only me, Karl, your friend Caspar Schott, don't you know me?"

"Good Karl Kreutzer"—"Gentle Karl"—
"Sweet Master Karl!"

These and a dozen still more coaxing blandishments were forcibly showered upon the agitated functionary; but every epithet in honour of his tenderness met a practical refutation, in the sturdy blows dealt round by his baton of office, and the maledictions which he profusely scattered among the invaders.

"May the curse of the three kings light on and blight ye all, scurvy rabble that ye are! Stand back, I say! Out on ye, knaves, out on ye! *Potz tausend!* Begone I say—no man enters here. Thunder and lightning! aback, aback, I say!"

And having at length succeeded in stemming the living torrent, Karl Kreutzer, forcibly closed the pondrous gates, and for perfect se-

curity against intrusion he fastened the iron chain across ; then wiping the plentiful moisture from his brow, adjusting his disordered and loose-fitting habiliments, and shaking himself into his place again, as it might be said, he hastily mounted the broad stone stair-case, bethinking him of what excuse he might best make for demanding short and instant speech with the Duchess of Saxe-Coburg. The most plausible was the pretext of some alms-asking suppliant pressing forward a petition on urgent need. The heavy-headed porter could invent no better on such short notice ; and such was the reason assigned for praying the princess to come forth, when, in virtue of his old prescriptive right of admission, he obsequiously entered the great gallery, and approached the balcony where the four ladies were standing.

Anne of Saxe Coburg started, with a feeling of instinctive alarm, when Karl Kreutzer clumsily stammered forth his untoward request.

“ Nay, duchess ! think not of it now

—the procession comes—it enters the Kirch-gasse—in a few minutes it will be here.”

“Good Karl, thou hast ill-timed this intrusion on her highness,” said the two daughters of Baron Kriechlingen, speaking together, but dividing those words between them.

“Dear young ladies, oppose me not,” said Karl, with solemn agitation and a stupidly important air, enough to betray any secret to more suspicious observers. “Let her worshipful highness the duchess come out to receive the letter—that is to say the petition—which the prince—the pauper I mean—would lay in her own gracious hand. It is of pressing import, believe me, ladies.”

“I know it: I *feel* it to be so!” exclaimed the duchess, with a suppressed and heavy tone; and so saying, she stepped to the anti-room beyond the gallery, where Karl immediately and stealthily slipped the letter into her hand, without saying a word, and then hurried away, thanking Heaven that he had eased his bosom of

“ the perilous stuff” which had lain so heavily on it for the previous ten minutes.

The duchess tore open the ribbon-clasped envelope, and read the following words :—“ I shall be at the procession to-day ; *know me not !* At thy deep and deadly risk be the hazard of a recognition.”

“ Oh God !” exclaimed the princess, the colour flying from her cheeks and lips, as her sinking heart convulsively drew in the life-blood from every artery of her frame, “ is he then *here* ? Am I nowhere safe ?”

She sunk on a cushioned bench that stood closely by, and might have fainted, had not the quick steps of her young and impatient hostesses coming to seek her, startled her into life again. Hurriedly thrusting the warning billet into the bosom of her dress, she tottered inwards and reached the balcony, as though attracted by an irresistible spell. Fortunately for her secret wishes neither of the sisters perceived her emotion. They thought only of the

coming procession, and leaned anxiously over the balustrade to mark it, as it turned the corner and entered the open space between their father's house and the church. But another, and a far differently constituted person, was at hand, to catch every shade which secret suffering threw over the fair face of the young du-chess, and to feel, in the purest depths of friendship, the reflected gloom from the sorrows of her she loved. This person was Agnes de Mansfeldt.

Anne of Saxony, wife of a sovereign duke, daughter of an electoral prince, and granddaughter of a king, for her mother was a princess of Denmark, was of more elevated rank, but scarcely of prouder lineage than the chosen and dear-loved friend of her youth, the heroine of our tale. Agnes was of a family conspicuous among the most distinguished of Germany. The race of Mansfeldt reckoned among its members an emperor, a count-palatine; several minor princes, with archbishops and bishops

innumerable; and many were their intermarriages with the royal houses of Europe. The pretensions of this proud family were of the highest order. They signed themselves counts, "by the grace of God," and pushed to the utmost their title to "right divine." They had maintained for ages fierce and independent wars with their neighbours, ravaged the territories of their enemies, quarrelled with their friends, fell out among each other, and proved themselves, in short, to be in all ways deserving of high note among the worthies of that monstrous anomaly in social relations, known by the name of the feudal system.

But whatever might have been their power or their pretensions in elder days, both had rapidly declined in the course of the 16th century. As their revenues diminished, their debts accumulated; they were often obliged to sell, at great loss, their lands and offices of state, to satisfy their creditors, and improvidence and misrule seem to have been handed down as heir-

looms from generation to generation. At the accession of Count John George, the father of Agnes, his hereditary debts amounted to two millions of florins, and his entire dominions were sequestered. He was, like most of his race, extravagant ; and the desperation of his fortunes tended, perhaps, to make him even more reckless than the rest. He embraced the tenets of Luther, to whom he was well known. That stalwart reformer tells us in his works that he had severely remonstrated with the count for the prodigality of his career. And it is recorded, that the pastor of Wittemberg (on one of those domiciliary visits), having entered the castle of Mansfeldt, and being about to mount the stairs, observed that the steps were flooded with wine. On inquiring the cause, he learned that the count was carousing with his friends, on which Luther cast his looks towards heaven, and raising his hands with gesture suiting his usual bold and vigorous eloquence, he prophesied that such profusion

could not go unpunished, but that the time was not distant when the grass would grow in the desert halls, which then witnessed such criminal excess.

Alas, for our heroine, that the foretelling of the great reformer should have been so well deserved and so soon fulfilled ! Her brave, but too prodigal, parent had ere long little left him but a good weapon and a dauntless heart. He chose from the castle armoury its greatest treasure and the boast of his line, the sword of the celebrated Count Hoyers—bade farewell to the valley of Mansfeldt, in Upper Thuringia, his birth-place and the seat of his fathers for countless ages—fought long and gallantly, under the celebrated Maurice of Saxony for the cause of religious liberty, and thus redeeming his errors, died at length, the founder of the *Eislebischen*, or Lutheran race, leaving to his three sons little but their titles, and to his only daughter the painful heritage of a proud name steeped in the bitterness of poverty.

Fortuneless, but not friendless, the young and most beautiful Agness had many offers of protection, and numberless invitations from her high and mighty connexions. Of these she availed herself insomuch as pride and prudence told her was becoming. Anne of Saxony, the niece of Maurice, her father's companion in arms, was the first to fly to her orphan friend, and the most zealously cordial in offers of a home, more suiting a young and lovely girl than the drear halls of Mansfeldt Castle. Agnes frankly accepted the offers so generously made. She had no qualms of spurious delicacy. The mind that is imbued with the genuine sort knows not the counterfeit; and the mind of Agnes—but that must be judged of by the sequel.

When the Princess Anne—yielding to the warm solicitings of John Casimir, Duke of Saxe-Coburg, and to the commands of her father, Augustus, Elector of Saxony—married too hastily for her future happiness, and left the

life-stirring palaces of Dresden for her husband's solitary castle, Agnes de Mansfeldt was not long in choosing her career.

She envied not the seemingly auspicious fate of her friend, even though she felt it was never likely to be her own. Marriage was a state that appeared beyond the accidents of her destiny. Not that she wanted suitors—she had too many for her own peace—but from reasons, or rather feelings, to be developed as we go on, she saw in each new offer fresh causes for rejection.

At length, from a peculiar reason which shall be in its place explained, she solemnly decided never to marry, and she followed up the unnatural resolution by the best security permitted by her religion. The teasing suit of lovers with whom she felt no sympathy was not to be endured. Her heart was too honest to feign affection—too generous to betray indifference—so she resolved to put herself in sanctuary, and escape the double embarrassment. She there-

fore sought and obtained an appointment as canoness of the Protestant convent of Gerrishem. Under a vow of celibacy for one year, and renewable at pleasure for the same period, she escaped the annoyance of her suitors' addresses. She returned once more to Mansfeldt as the mistress of its comparative desolation, sharing its solitude with her brothers, who inhabited it by turns, or together, as their caprices suggested or their pursuits required; protected, guided, and instructed by the old chaplain and faithful friend of the house, Cyriacus Spangenberg, the disciple of Luther, and the associate of Melancthon in some of his most important theological works, particularly the celebrated "Confession of Augsburg."

The duties of canoness of a Protestant convent were rather nominal than rigid. They required no residence within the walls. They entailed no ceremonies beyond them, they carried no prohibitions of any of the decent and rational pleasures of life which are sanctioned

by social forms, with the exception of matrimony for some given period, and that we willingly allow is a state which embraces many of those, and sanctifies them all.

A yearly pension was attached to the title, and a small cross, embroidered on velvet or ribbon, was worn on the left side of the bosom by a crimson string, a simple and sacred decoration, unstained with the deep vanities of many a more glaring badge.

Agnes had rarely availed herself of her privilege of social enjoyment, during the year of her engagement, which was nearly expired, when her relatives, Fredolinda and Emma Von Kriechlingen, pressingly invited her to visit them at Cologne, to participate in some of the gaieties prepared for the period of the congress, and to meet her dear-loved friend the Duchess of Saxe-Coburg, who had honoured them by demanding a few weeks' hospitality, on condition of every point of ceremony and etiquette connected with her rank being laid aside, and her visit

being considered as one of friendship and not of form.

The last inducement, and a pressing letter from the duchess, decided Agnes to accept the summons. The friends met (for the first time since the marriage of Anne, two years previously) on their arrival in Cologne the day before the one on which our story opens. And what a world of mutual confidence did they not, during that day and the night which closed on it, pour into each others breasts! But the procession? It has long since reached Saint Columba's platz, and now halts at a reposoir, or temporary altar, erected in advance of the church portal, and consequently fronting the mansion of Baron Von Kriechlingen.

CHAPTER II.

A ROMAN Catholic procession, like all the ceremonies of that gorgeous church, is fitted to excite the feelings in no moderate degree. It must be either profound veneration or deep contempt, which animates the orthodox assistant, or inspires the heretic spectator. No one who sees the spectacle can be wholly indifferent to it. It is an offering worthy of Heaven, or a rite degrading to common sense. God is honoured, or man debased. The true attributes of religion are to be defined. There is no medium line. Enthusiasm and reason take conflicting sides of the question, and in such a case what rational mind stands neutral ?

Varied were the sensations raised on the occasion before us, in the numerous population of Cologne and its surrounding hamlets and villages, which had all poured out their votaries. The great majority were pious Catholics; but reform had made a progress in the electorate quite correspondent to that in all the southern parts of Germany. Lutheranism had a large body of adherents ; and the more rigid doctrines of Calvinism attracted, by a fascinating charm, many an overwrought fanatic to join that withering sect.

On occasions like the present, most of those who disapproved of or were shocked by the ceremony abstained from sanctioning it, even in appearance, by their presence. But several of those who could not join it as a duty, viewed it, as it passed their dwellings, as they would a theatrical exhibition ; and all who did, from piety or policy, take a part, entered into it with an energy that evidently sprung from conviction or very successfully assumed its tone.

No efforts were spared to render those displays imposingly effective, at a period when zeal for the new doctrines strained the resisting sinews of Romish prerogative to their utmost stretch ; and the procession of the 5th April, 1579, is recorded as eclipsing in sumptuous profusion all former outlays of magnificence in Cologne.

We will not fatigue our readers, nor retard our story, by a detailed description of matters which fancy can easily conjure up. Banners, tapers, reliques ; rich costumes, music, flowers, and incense ; all that could take the senses by surprise, or soothingly lead them into sympathy, were prodigally and skilfully brought into play. The treasures and triumphs of near two hundred churches, and half as many convents, under the escort of above two thousand priests of various ranks and denominations, testified to the accumulated wealth of the archiepiscopal city. Long files of magistrates, in rich attire, gave evidence of its corporate piety ; and several thousand beggars walking in serried ranks

in the tail of the procession, told that conventional and civic charity must have both been great, at once to tolerate and support such a legion of sloth within its walls.

The superbly tapestried and embroidered awning, under which the consecrated Eucharist was carried, now stood still before the reposoir. The “innocents” (as the juvenile choiristers were called) and the full-grown singers had ceased their chant. The short service appropriated to those haltings was in the act of being recited by one of the officiating bishops ; and the crowd of glittering costumes, lay and clerical, which surrounded the main group dazzled the eyes of the spectators, and filled many of those who gazed down upon the scene with burning curiosity, to know by name the various individuals by which it was composed. *Our* group was not wanting in this natural feeling of the occasion, and, as satirists say, this natural failing of the sex. It needs not be told, that it was modified in individual cases according to the characters of the

four bright and youthful beings who adorned the balcony. While the two sisters panted with that girlish love of novelty, merely because it was such, common we suppose to all who have but just been freed from the restraint of conventional education, the two friends who had been longer in the world and had known more of its ways, were touched with an interest in the event which embraced such serious associations of thought, and in the distinguished agents on whom its management devolved.

Yet far different feelings filled the two bosoms, whose sympathies on this occasion, as in most others, were so congenial, but whose sensations were so varied. Agnes was in her nineteen year, Anne in her one-and-twentieth. The former had known the anxieties of life, the latter its temptations. One had been reared amid difficulties and trials, the other in the very lap of ease and luxury. The first felt the circumstances of her station to be unworthy of her; the second knew that *she* was unsuited to the

place she occupied, but which she could not be said to fill. Agnes, from the earliest epoch of mature intelligence, had felt marriage and its mighty maze of delights and duties to be impossibilities for her. Anne, from her youngest days, had been taught that a wedded establishment was in her case an invincible necessity. Fate had seemed to vow one to a¹ state of celibacy, humiliating to loveliness, high intellect, and exquisite susceptibility of happiness ; while destiny threw the other into an union that promised rapture and brought forth misery. Agnes's heart had hitherto known but the restraints of suppressed emotion. That of Anne had felt the chill of blighted hope. Agnes's worst suffering had been wounded pride ; her friend had endured the pangs of crushed affection.

It has been already shewn that the Duchess of Saxe-Coburg had some secret cause of mental pain, of which Agnes had received a partial confidence the previous day. But she

knew nothing of the mysterious warning of which we have informed our readers. Therefore she felt not, even by sympathy, the agitation of her friend ; but if not to the full as anxious (for no one can make the case of another absolutely their own) she certainly looked more so ; for her countenance was always the true reflection of a mind of almost unequalled singleness and sincerity ; while Anne, on the contrary, had a command of feature and a flexibility of tone, that allowed her to wear a smile or feign a laugh, when the spring that set one in motion, or the chords that attuned the other, had their workings in the very depths of an anguished heart. Thy both fixed their looks intently on the picturesque crowd beneath ; and, no matter what their separate feelings, they could not resist the influence of the imposing scene.

At this moment, a young man, in the uniform of the university of Bonn, announced by a servant as Herr Ulrick Von Leckenstein, advanced along the gallery, and modestly approaching

the window which opened into the balcony, he was urgently beckoned forward by his kinswomen Fredolinda and Emma.

"Welcome, welcome Ulrick!" exclaimed the latter, who was the younger of the two, "we never were so glad to see you, or wished for you so much—did we, Freda?"

Her sister, to whom this question was addressed, blushed deeply as she replied that "Cousin Ulrick was always welcome, and that he certainly had arrived opportunely to tell them the names of the personages below." She then muttered an introduction to the duchess and Agnes, but in so confused a way, that the young stranger might have easily confounded one with the other, had not the virgin badge of the canoness told him the distinction.

"Nay, nay, Ulrick, come forward," cried the lively and impatient Emma; "this is always the way with you and Freda. Ye stand blushing and stammering at each other, like children saying their catechism. Come close to

us. The duchess and Countess Agnes want you to tell us the names of all those great people, who look so lowly, yet think so highly all the while. Now, quickly run over all the names and point out the persons," continued she, as Ulrick advanced and placed himself, from respect, close to the duchess, and, from a feeling full as pure and ten times as profound, as far away as possible from the blooming girl he loved, with the fear and trembling of boyhood.

" That venerably cunning-looking old man in the middle, in those superb robes, is of course the nuncio ?" asked Emma.

" Yes, that is John Baptiste Costagna, Archbishop of Rossano, and the Pope's nuncio, sent by his Holiness, Gregory XIII. to take care of his innocent flock of Cologne, now there are so many heretical wolves close to the fold."

" Take care, for Heaven's sake, Ulrick," said Fredolinda ; " do not smile when you make

those observations, for you know our house is marked among the heresies ; and perhaps one of the electors themselves might by chance turn his looks this way."

" I declare one of them *has* his eyes fixed on us already," exclaimed Emma. " Which of the archbishops is that Ulrick ? is it our Sovereign or his Eminence of Treves, for they say that both are in the procession ?"

" I don't like to stare at him be it which it may," replied Ulrick, avoiding to look directly at the place occupied by the two prince prelates. " But you may be sure that his Highness, John of Treves, is too pious to turn even one stray glance on the dangerous temptations of this balcony."

" Then it is our own liege lord, whom I have been so long longing to see. His eyes are fixed on us like burning-glasses—I hope he is not angry with us."

" Never fear, Emma, his highness can feel nothing but regard for whatever is here. You

know he is your father's stanch friend, and you must have heard enough to believe that the sight of beauty is not likely to move him to wrath."

"Really, Ulrick, your college course so near his highness' residence has taught you some of his gallantry. How he stares at us! I wonder if he is praying like the other two archbishops, who gaze so intently on that great golden crucifix?"

Ulrick gave a moment's look towards the elector, and then, with an arch expression, and fixing his eyes on Agnes, he said in his peculiar sly, dry manner—

"In truth I believe his highness *is* at his devotions, and, like his venerable colleagues, the cross seems to be the object of his fascination."

Agnes felt her face and neck glow, and she involuntarily cast down her looks and turned her head aside; for she could not now fail to perceive that the ardent eyes of the splendidly

attired and princely-looking personage in question were rivetted upon her.

Fredolinda had silently enjoyed what she considered the very graceful and rather witty remarks of her cousin. How little critical is the heart towards those it loves ! Duchess Anne had neither heard what passed, nor observed the important person whose attentive scrutiny had been the subject of what was said. Her anxious looks had darted into the throng below, and wandered electrically through it. But she did not distinguish the face, the *fear* of seeing which so irresistibly attracted her piercing gaze; for it is in the very essence of fear to make its victims hearken for the sounds that shock them, or seek the objects they abhor.

“ Well, truly the elector is of a striking air, he seems fitter for a soldier than a priest, methinks,” observed Fredolinda.

“ He is celebrated for his conquests,” said Ulrick.

"Nay, cousin, there is satire in all you say of his highness," exclaimed Fredolinda.

"What is that, Ulrick?" briskly asked Emma. "Satire? oh! pray say it again—I love satire in my heart."

"Because you have no reason to fear it, my pretty cousin," said the student.

"Thanks, most learned and accomplished Herr," said Emma, with mock gravity and courtesying low. "Verily, your studies are completed, you are quite fit to take your degree—you pay compliments like a conjuror."

"A conjuror!" exclaimed the Duchess of Coburg. "Who? where? what did you say?" and as she rapidly put the questions she looked around in startled alarm, as if unconscious of their utterance.

Agnes alone observed deeper than the surface of this incoherent manner. She threw a look of keen affection on her friend. The latter instantly recovered herself, smiled bewitchingly, and addressing Ulrick, told him, "She hoped

he had not practised any too serious conjurations on her young friend Emma."

"On me!" exclaimed the light-hearted girl, laughing outright, and so loud that her sister and friends were filled with alarm, lest it might attract the notice of the crowd below—"on me!" repeated she, indifferent to their apprehensions. "No, your highness, Herr Ulrick does not consider me worthy of his spells—it is Freda he practises on; but I think he is sometimes caught in his own snare, for one seems as much bewitched as the other. Not to speak profanely, it reminds me of the old proverb, quoted by Chaplain Spangenberg at breakfast this morning, of the devil being tricked by Sathanus."

"For shame, for shame, Emma!" said Fredolinda, in most tale-telling confusion, "you speak too lightly on serious subjects—you make too free with names—I do not mean mine—or—cousin Ulrick's, but—but—"

"That most respectable potentate the king

of darkness, is it not sister?" and another laugh followed this commentary on poor Freda's confused reproaches, at which even the duchess and Agnes smiled, though not "righte merrilie disposed," as the old chroniclers at times represent their happy heroines. Young Ulrick, who was ready enough in repartee or remark on common subjects, seemed absolutely stuftified whenever he was placed, in presence of others, by any means, in juxtaposition with his heart's idol. He now stood silently, and with the look of a criminal whose conscience will not suffer him to plead not guilty.

"Thou art a happy and a giddy creature, Emma," said the duchess, with a heavy sigh, which was far less the breath of envy than of self-conscious comparison.

"I know I am, dear Duchess Anne, I confess my errors; and only wish Martin Luther, Pastor Spangenberg, and the rest of our reverend reformers, had not preached down indulgences, when they preached up heresy. I am

sure that I, and Ulrick, and Freda, and many such sinners——”

“ Emma, Emma ! I *must* stop that wild-going tongue of thine. Remember that our dear father and the venerable chaplain of Mansfeldt are closetted in the book-room close by, and were they to catch these irreverend words——”

“ Nay, Freda, I must interrupt in my turn, aye, and reprove too ! this is hypocrisy, sister of mine, and shifting on the shoulders of thy neighbours what is, mayhap, too heavy for thine own. My father and our reverend old guest are so closely shut up together—and thou knowest it—that neither sight nor sound can enter, lest the abominations of this grand ceremony might shock their eyes or ears.”

“ Hark !” said Freda, “ the little bell rings again ; and see the surpliced boys are throwing up the silver incensories towards Heaven. How beautiful is that perfumed vapour floating on the air ! How sublime that living mass, bowing

down at once to the earth ! How impressive that faint, tinkling sound, amid the stillness of the crowd !”

“ How much more odorous, and beautiful, and solemn, the offering of a single heart, in loneliness and silence, without parade or pageantry ! at least so I have been taught, and so I feel,” said Agnes, turning aside and abruptly checking the animated discussion she felt herself inadvertently led into.

“ And I too,” rejoined Freda ; “ that is my creed also, dear Agnes, when I do not look on those exciting spectacles. But they carry me away—I know not why or wherefore.”

“ You are an enthusiast, Freda.”

“ Perhaps so ; but look down on those thousands, see how they are all absorbed alike, rich and poor, young and old !”

“ With the exception of our dread sovereign, yonder,” said Emma ; “ for he still stares at us, as if this balcony was heaven itself. I am sure he takes us for angels. He has abso-

lutely forgotten to kneel down, while all the rest bend to the very rushes that cover the dust."

"If common report be truth, 'tis not the first nor the fiftieth time that gallantry has made him forget religion," said Ulrick.

"What a shame, for so old a man and a prelate!" exclaimed Emma.

"What a pity rather that the same individual should ever be prince and priest together, the prescription of one station running counter to the duties of the other!" observed Agnes.

"Falls in love! oh, shocking!" uttered Emma, in reply to some whispered remark of her cousin.

"Poor man! perhaps he cannot help it," said Freda, in a tone of half languishing sympathy, that made her sister laugh once more, and all the others smile again.

"The procession is preparing to move on. Pray, Herr Von Leckenstein, can you be so good as to name those seigneurs who stand close

to the prelates? they are the other commissioners, no doubt?" asked the duchess.

"They are so, madam," replied the young student, moving close beside her, and mentioning the names of the most prominent members of the conference; coupling with each some quaint remark, that often made the duchess smile, and all through fixed her attention to what he uttered. While he talked as if inspired by the honour of such close intercourse with a lady of such high rank and such rare beauty, she listened as though she had altogether recovered from her late anxiety.

In this way Ulrick passed in review the Dukes of Terranova and Arschot (the representative of Philip II. of Spain and Mathias the Archduke of the Netherlands) the Bishop of Wurtzburg, Count Otto of Schwartzemburg, and a long train of noble, reverend, legal, and literary functionaries, the greater part of whom he knew by name; and even when he did not, he was rarely at a loss for trait of invention,

encouraged by the amusement he seemed to afford his fair listeners.

Freda, influenced it might be by slight pique or passing jealousy at her lover's attention to another, gave the least notice to his observations, and seemed overpowered by the imposing grandeur of the spectacle, and the pious or proud bearing, as it might be, of the chief actors in it. As few of those persons have more than the floating interest of the moment, either in our memory or in the progress of our tale, we pass by the various observations they called forth, as well as a minute description of their persons. One of them, however, being paramount in our consideration, we must record one passage more of the irregular conversation that related to him.

The head of the procession had moved away, and was lost in the narrow street that led from the platz, or square of Saint Columba. Ulrick was continuing his strain of lively remarks on each new passer by, and had now descended from the rank of princedom and nobility to the

files of burgher aristocracy which had succeeded them. His four listeners seemed thinking only of his strictures on the corporation pride, or factious perversity, of these citizens, when Agnes suddenly asked him,

“ Pray what is his age at present ?”

“ Whose age, madam ?” demanded Ulrick, surprised at the abrupt and irrelevant question.

“ Oh, the archbishop’s ”—

“ Fair countess, there were three in the procession.”

“ Well, well, the elector’s ?”

“ Madam you must fain remember that two prince-electors walked side by side just now.”

“ I mean your own sovereign, Herr Ulrick ; but the question was one of mere curiosity—’tis of no matter.”

“ Really, Agnes, if that said sovereign of ours paid you homage, you seem to have sworn him allegiance. His exclusive looks are answered by exclusive thoughts,” said Emma, with an expression that would have been mali-

cious, if so kind a heart or so pretty a face as her's could have suggested or expressed any thing unamiable. Ulrick, wishing to relieve Agnes from a raillery which evidently embarrassed her, answered her question.

“ Our elector reckoned thirty-seven summers last August, according to the calendar, but is at least a dozen less in character and habits, if hearsay belie him not.”

“ Thirty-seven only ! and is this what Emma calls so old a man ? I should have thought him older,” observed Duchess Anne.

“ You did not mark him closely,” said Agnes ; “ he appeared to me younger.”

“ In truth,” rejoined the duchess, “ I looked more at his sumptuous garments than at him, and not much at either, for my eye sought another object.”

“ And, happily I should think, did not find it, dearest Anne,” whispered Agnes, pressing her friend’s hand tenderly.

“ My own, my best friend ! no one knows

me like you," replied the duchess, in the same tone, returning the pressure, and involuntarily expressing in her looks the heart's pain which sympathy softens but cannot neutralize. "Oh, Agnes," continued she, "how I long to unburthen my breast to you wholly!"

"We shall soon find a time," replied Agnes, turning away towards the sisters and the student, lest they might observe the duchess's emotion, and also from her interest in the subject they continued to discuss—the appearance and character of the archbishop.

"Oh, the latter certainly," said Freda, in reply to Ulrick's question, whether she thought the subject of their remark had more the bearing of a pious prelate or a proud prince? "He wore his mitre as if it were a crown, and he had none of that air of mock or real humility which sat so ill on the other two. While his commanding figure, though encumbered by his robe, and not more than the middle height—"

"Rather under it," said Ulrick.

"Indeed! I should have said above it," exclaimed Agnes.

"That's only grateful of you Agnes, for *you* certainly filled a large space in his highness's eyes," observed Emma, in her half careless, half cunning way.

"The drapery of his vestments, and the form of his mitre, add apparently to his stature," said Ulrick, not regarding Emma's words or looks, and as if glad to interpose between them and Agnes, whose natural fine colour received a deeper tinge, from every passing breeze of her young relative's raillery.

"I should rather," said she, "attribute the effect to an innate sense of superiority, which naturally gives the carriage an elevated air;" and as Agnes uttered the opinion, she inadvertently illustrated it by a proud, but by no means affected, movement of her whole person, which did not exceed the common height of well-grown womanhood, and which, it may here be added, was a model of delicate yet voluptuous

tuous proportion. The Duchess of Saxe-Coburg was taller, slighter, and, in the common notion, of more dignified mien. Neither of the sisters were quite as tall as Agnes ; but they had respectively two or three years to grow up to her stature. To surpass her in graceful elegance of form was only in the compass of a miracle.

“ There is, no doubt, much truth in Countess Agnes’s remark,” said Ulrick ; “ the elector is of a great and confident ambition. He notoriously considers his career a doomed one, and is said to have never yet failed in any object of his life, public or private.”

“ A doomed career ? on what grounds ?” asked Freda, caught by the romantic notion.

“ Your highness has no doubt heard the incident of Archbishop Ghebhard’s early life ? and Countess Agnes too, perhaps ?” asked the student, turning to the stranger ladies ; they bowed assent.

“ But I have not, Ulrick,” said Freda, somewhat reproachfully.

"Nor I," echoed Emma; "they never told us those heart-stirring stories in the convent."

"Truly, fair cousins," rejoined Ulrick, with a serious and half-dissatisfied tone, "what ye have already heard and seen of his highness and his character seems to have filled your minds altogether."

"Jealousy, jealousy!" exclaimed Emma, with her usual laugh of most genuine and musical enjoyment. "Cousin Ulrick already jealous, and of the old archbishop! Nay, nay, do not look angry, or knit your brows at me, Ulrick. No, nor throw that coaxing leer now, to bribe me to silence—it is true—it is true! Cousin Ulrick is jealous of the archbishop!"

"You had better tell her the story," said Agnes, smiling the while. The duchess did as much. Even Freda enjoyed what she thought a just punishment to her lover; and he, feeling that he looked foolish as well as faulty, agreed with Agnes; and with a forced laugh endeavouring to silence the real one he had raised, he

related the well-known anecdote, that while Ghebhard Truchses, then only a simple canon just in orders, happening to be present at a fête given at Antwerp to the Archduchess Anne of Austria, and passing under one of the triumphal arches erected in her honour, a scutcheon with the armorial bearings of the Electorate of Cologne, which with those of the other princes of the empire formed part of the decorations, fell on his hat but without doing any injury. He instantly declared that it was a presage of his future greatness ; and following up the omen, he never paused in his efforts, until, by his talents and the influence of his friends, he obtained the important dignity which made the emblazoned honours his own.

“ What a noble character of energy and courage that must be ! ” exclaimed Freda, glowing with the generous sympathy of an enthusiastic mind.

“ Did you know a thousandth part of the obstacles that opposed his path, and the dif-

ficulties that even now beset him in maintaining his dignity, you would feel even more strongly for him, dear Freda," said Ulrick, catching the impulse which inspired her.

"I know he has many enemies in this bigot city. Why does he not come here oftener?"

"You have just given the reason. He hates the place, and I might add all in it, with the exception of your father and a few other faithful friends."

"And therefore he resides at Bonn?"

"Exactly, where, even, he does not sleep on a bed of roses."

"You sometimes see the elector at Bonn?" asked Agnes.

"He occasionally admits me to the honour of dining at his table."

"You know him personally, then?" said Agnes; but she checked the questions that were rising to her lips, recollecting that the laughing eye of Emma was fixed on her, and her tongue still untied.

At the same moment Duchess Anne caught her arm with a convulsive grasp, uttering some imperfect exclamation, while she quickly turned her look from the street, and left the balcony in evident agitation. But having found a seat, she instantly recovered herself, and assured her alarmed friends that she had only suffered from a momentary pain—in side or head—she forgot which, it was so rapidly over. And she insisted and implored that they should all resume their places, and observe the conclusion of the procession.

There was something too serious in her manner to admit of refusal or delay. Agnes and the others stepped back into the balcony, and thence turned their looks again beyond; nothing remarkable caught their eyes, till in the very closing ranks of the *cortege* they observed a carriage so remarkable in its equipment as to excite in the throng around it, an astonishment and curiosity still greater than their own. It was covered with gilding, and

so splendidly ornamented that it seemed, with its six milk-white horses and richly-liveried lacqueys, to have been produced by the wand of some enchanter, Cologne had never seen any equipage half so elegant; and it was escorted by twenty mounted cavaliers, all bearing the same distinctive badge and colours, which profusely glittered on the vehicle itself.

Within it reclined, in an attitude of cold dignity, as if unconscious of his greatness or indifferent to the wonderment it caused, a man, magnificently dressed, of a good person, but a countenance neither handsome nor pleasing, and of about thirty years of age. As his equipage and train defiled under the balcony, he took off his plumed montero cap, rose in his seat, and with easy condescension saluted the group above. They returned his bows by gentle inclinations of the head; and silently wondering at this splendid apparition, they followed it with their eyes till it had quite disappeared;

the sounds of the musicians and choiristers gradually dying away in the distance, the crowd silently moving on, and soon leaving St. Columba's platz quite lone and deserted. Then only did the young friends join the duchess, who received them as usual, with forced gaiety and woe-concealing smiles.

CHAPTER III.

WITHIN a couple of hours following the scene we have just described, the procession had trained its slow length through the principal streets, halted at the several stations, and finally reached the cathedral, that sublime abortion of architectural magnificence, which beginning to crumble ere it could be completed, stands a rare monument of the too ambitious fate of genius; for the name of him who planned the mighty structure is now as unknown as those of the ignoble artisans who raised its hundred columns, the clustered shafts and flower wreathed capitals of which look like the petrified section of some giant forest. Many another moral

may be found by those who seek for such, in this vast emblem of sectarian power, stricken midway in its path of pride. And what lessons of taste does it not convey? not merely to the votary of art who lauds its light-sprung arches, its groined ceilings, its chiselled pillars, or its massive walls, but to the worshipper of nature, who sees even in the corruption of decay such exquisite traces of beauty. There is not a ruin of the Rhine—and where do they abound so beautiful as on its banks?—that does not tell us, like this mightiest of them all, that time is the true master of the picturesque. He does not sweep in vulgar flight, the common-place devourer of man's triumphs. Even where he destroys he defaces not. Every mark of his tooth leaves a trait of loveliness, every feather of his wing a tint of grace.

The solemn service of high mass, in which the several dignitaries before-named all bore a part, had now fitly concluded the ceremonies of the day; the dense masses of spectators

which filled the cathedral gradually melted away into fractional groups; and appetite, which disperses a crowd quicker than the riot act, and attracts individuals to their homes more surely than any other sense of duty, began to exert its universal influence. Carriages were in waiting at the doors of the holy structure for the several high personages. They all soon reached their various residences. We must accompany him who interests us most, the Elector Ghebhard, and fancy ourselves arrived with him at the old and gloom-inspiring archiepiscopal palace. It must be observed, that as the state carriage conveyed this sovereign through the streets of the chief city—though Bonn, as being his residence, was considered the capital—no gratulatory shouts or popular compliments gave him escort. Instead of those sounds, the most grateful to the ear of power, the clattering hoofs of his soldier-guard, the rattle of their armour and accoutrements, and the brazen-breath fanfare of noisy trumpets,

were the only signals of his progress. Few doffed their caps, or stopped on the way in token of respect; and even those who did so were more influenced by veneration for the mitre than attachment to the man. But none bowed to him in real reverence, and “not one cried God bless him!”

The elector seemed little affected by these silent evidences of unpopularity, yet there was at times an involuntary frown on his haughty brow, and his sensual lip was now and then slightly curled, when some rude fellow gave too evident a token of disrespect. As he alighted from his vehicle, and mounted the palace steps with an air of bold authority, a rough voice from one of the bystanders muttered some words, of which he caught only the last spoken.

“A heretic in his heart; but we shall soon have a true believer in his place.”

As Ghebhard caught this plain allusion to his religious principles and open threat against his

authority, he stopped short, sternly fixed his eyes on the speaker, and then, resuming his way, entered the palace porch, and passed on between files of liveried serving-men, into an attendant group of household officers and other members of his princely establishment.

Scarcely had he disappeared among his train, when the same voice which had uttered the insulting words, cried out loudly,

“ Long live Ernest of Bavaria ! Long live the Bishop of Liege !”

And shouts soon arose, mingled with expressions of still more direct sedition.

“ Down with the mitred heretic ! Down with false Ghebhard ! Ernest for ever !” were now the watchwords of riot. The stragglers, who had acted with no premeditated plan, pressed round the portico of the palace ; and he who had begun the tumult led the way, with violent gestures, calling aloud to the others to “ follow him and do justice on the tyrant renegade within.”

At this critical moment the young lieutenant who commanded the elector's cavalry escort ordered his men to charge at once upon the rioters. These were no times for forms of civil ceremony. The sword blade, the lance's point, or the trampling hoofs of the horses, were the warning summonses in the name of the law, for the law was little better than brute force. And sooth to say, the bold burghers of those fighting days did not stand on nice points of etiquette, when they in their turns assailed the hired heroes of feudality. Bludgeon, and bill, and axe, or any other tool of civil war, were readily grasped and promptly brought into play, in the eternal tumults of the good old times; and a sudden whack on the morion, a cleft skull, or maimed limb, was often the first notice given to the earliest victim of a popular revolt.

In the present instance a rapier, guided by a nervous arm, laid its sharp length on the countenance of the rude leader of the mob, before he had time to repeat his war cry; and a gash

of most frightful dimensions from brow to chin, gave him wherewithal to remember the day to his life's end, whenever he trimmed his beard or anointed his mustachios before a looking-glass. His unprepared and frightened associates fled like scattered sheep in all directions. The officer, not liking to risk his troops in the narrow and lane-like streets around, offered no pursuit. The wounded culprit was carried off to prison, and the rest of the city knew nothing of this local accident, for such it was, and no more.

But the elector, attracted to one of the windows by the tumult, had seen the greater part of the transaction ; and he resolved to reward, in his own way, and on the spot, the active exertions of the lieutenant. He ordered him to be brought into his presence ; and the young man, on entering the chamber to which he had retired, found him, with the aid of his valet, throwing off his heavy and thick-embroidered vestments with a careless air.

"So, young sir," said the elector. "How comes it that you, with such slight ceremony—"

"May it please your highness, they told me to enter. It is not my fault," exclaimed the officer, in alarmed mistake of his sovereign's meaning, and in ignorance of his peculiar manner.

"Nay, stay where you are. I would talk with you," said the latter, stopping the lieutenant's quick movement of retreat. "Why was it that you, with so small respect, charged on those worthy citizens."

"Worthy citizens! Did your highness but"—

"And gave such a rude token to that huge artizan of the temper of your rapier and your own?"

"The ruffian dog spoke treason—rank treason, your highness, and I cut him down."

"What were his words?"

"What it is little meet your princely ears should be shocked with hearing. I dare not

repeat the offensive outrage. The foul-mouthinged villain met but his just punishment ; and if I have done wrong I am ready to meet mine."

The high-toned sincerity of these words was pleasant to the elector's ear ; he saw with a glance that such a quick spirit might be wanting in the days which were at hand, and he resolved to cherish it. He looked on the young man with an encouraging smile, and his smile was, when he chose it, of sweet and powerful expression.

" You have done gallantly and well in this small matter," said he, graciously, " which gives proof of what I may expect from you on greater occasions. What is your name ? "

" I am called Gaspar Von Heyen, may it please your highness."

" It pleases me that you shall be henceforth called Captain Von Heyen. Such is your title from this hour ; and until your new warrant can be made out let this signet, which I give you in the warmth of goodwill, and with all the pri-

vileges it confers, be the token of your rank. I shall expect you to dine with me to-day, and in half an hour, remember."

The young man, overwhelmed by this unlooked-for turn in the tide which had appeared the moment before to be setting so strongly against him, was unable to make any reply, and stood motionless on the spot.

"I know all you would say, and I will say it for you—to myself, gallant captain," said the elector, smiling again, bowing graciously, and retiring, followed by his valet to an inner room. The new-made captain recovered himself as well and as quickly as he could, put the precious ring on his finger, and stalked forth from the palace to change his buff doublet and huge trooper's boots for a more seemly dinner-suit, swelling with that bloated loyalty which is compounded of grateful feeling, self-applause, and tickled vanity."

"Ah, my friend! art thou here already?" exclaimed the elector, as he entered his private

cabinet, and found it occupied by a person of noble mien, richly yet plainly dressed, and of about his own age, into whose embrace he almost sprang.

“ Dear Nuenar, this is prompt and kind ! I could scarcely have reckoned on an answer to my summons, and here thou art !”

“ Ghebhard, thou camest as quick, and quicker in *my* time of need—would that I had the might as I have the will to serve thee.”

“ Thou hast it Nuenar, and I need it all. Sit thee down and list to me.”

Count Nuenar obeyed the wish of his old and intimate friend ; while the elector, dismissing his attendant, walked to and fro, disengaging himself of the remainder of his gaudy trappings, and talking the while.

“ My brow is easier, now that I have doffed the mitre ; see Nuenar, what a mark it leaves on my front,” and as he spoke he stopped before a high and broad mirror of great value and rare dimensions, which stood in a richly-carved frame against the wall.

"Aye, now I look once more like a free man ;" continued he, "thank Heaven, I have cast aside for a while those trammels of church pride ! What a penalty I pay in those restraints, for the power I enjoy."

"Dost thou *enjoy* it, Ghebhard?"

"Do I? aye, Adolphus, in my heart's heart ! Is it not glorious to lord it over the base herd—and more so still to raise up honest worth, and make a warm heart grow warmer with joy and pride ? Even this very instant here, just as I entered, I was able to do both, and that without an effort, by the mere force of the station——"

"Thou hast so hardly earned."

"True, Nuenar ! and which——"

"Thou wilt find it harder to preserve?"

"Tis even so, good Nuenar, and it is for this thou art here to-day."

"Has anything strange occurred ? Hast thou unravelled any fresh intrigue?"

"The designs of my enemies now require no

unravelling, nor is there any novelty in their base acts. This whole city is a mass of open treason."

" And yet the emperor has sent thee hither, as his umpire in the conference !"

" That I might commit myself in some way with my colleagues, or break into open rupture with the chapter, or that beggarly town council, which dares to thwart every measure I propose, even for their own good."

" And what is the object of all this ? where would they have it end ? How comes the emperor, even, a party in the cabal ?"

" The object is my ruin, and the cause, as I am told, envy. My friends here and elsewhere say that all is centred in that one word ; that I am hated by high and low, because they feel me—as I feel myself!—to tower above them all—in mind at least, if not in might. But that too may come, and even this cringing nuncio crawl at my footstool yet !"

" Ah, Ghebhard ! Ghebhard ! Does thy am-

bition take that flight again? I had other hopes for thee."

"Hark thee, Adolphus; I must have power, or I die! I have not yet half drained the intoxicating draught. I would be emperor or pope—aye or higher still, if worldly rank had yet a loftier station. Nay, look no reproof, my friend, for I am not false to my opinions nor my pledge. I laugh at, even while I loathe, the corrupt abuses of this church in which I am a hierarch. I love reform as well as thou dost, all Lutheran as thou art. Every act of my authority leads to the adoption of the new doctrines throughout my fief; but I cannot turn the flood of public feeling. I must wait till it comes to the full, and take it at its ebb."

"And yet thou wouldest be pope? thou wouldest wear away the impress of the mitre by the tiara's still heavier weight!"

"Tut, tut, Adolphus," exclaimed the elector, laughing, "thou art too precise—thou takest a passing word, the mere type of an ambitious

thought, as though I had sworn it for my creed ! I said I would be pope or emperor, mark ye, yet no man can be both, nor do *I* look to be either, believe me, my too matter-of-fact friend. In short, Nuenar, I know not rightly what I say, for I am not quite certain of what I feel. My blood is boiling—this whole scene to-day excites me to the utmost—and one bright vision which crossed the procession's path, has out-shone even all the splendour of Heaven and earth, and set my mind a-flame."

"A vision?"

"Oh, Adolphus, how thou wouldest pin me down to terms and definitions ! Well then, it was, in good faith a form of almost visionary brightness and immortal beauty."

"Oh, a woman!"

"A woman ! an angel, Adolphus ! I gazed on her with special wonderment and delight, and from a mixed feeling ; for did I not know that the unfortunate Queen of France, or of Scots, as they choose rather to call her in England,

was a dozen years older, and in close durance there, I could have sworn she stood to day (as I saw her of old in the Louvre gallery) in the open balcony of our good friend Conrad Von Kriechlingen."

"I never saw the hapless Mary Stuart."

"Nay, but hast thou seen this younger, and full as beautiful copy of that fair model? That is more to the point."

"I know not exactly at what point thou would'st aim, Ghebhard; but belike it was Duchess Anne of Saxe-Coburg who caught thine eye to-day. A letter from Von Kriechlingen tells me she comes to visit at his house, during the sportive mummeries of this mock peace-making."

"No, it could not have been she that so struck me, though doubtless she was among the group. The brilliant creature who so enamoured—I would say so pleased me—was not a married woman."

"How knowest thou that?"

"By having marked the cross of a canoness, which lay on her fair and heaving bosom."

"Then it was the daughter of John George of Mansfeldt, who so fixed you," said Nuenar, amused but nothing surprised at the graphic minuteness of his more ardent friend.

"I knew not he left a daughter—has she brothers?" asked Ghebhard quickly.

"She *has*, three, at your highness's service," replied Nuenar, with an emphasis, and something like a serious smile, the meaning of which the elector knew, but seemed not to heed.

"Are those young men provided for?"

"Not all, as I have learned—wouldest thou be willing to dispose of them?"

"Count Mansfeldt was a gallant knight; the emperor ought not to neglect his children," said Ghebhard, with a careless air, adjusting his dress before the mirror, and seeming to disregard the half sarcastic tone of his friend.

"Wert thou emperor, Ghebhard, his daughter would be--"

“ High in my favour most surely, if her merit bears even small proportion to her beauty; for that, I confess myself to worship. Adolphus, she is divine !”

“ I doubt it not.”

“ If thou didst 'twere a heresy worse than that thou art convicted of. But enough of this canoness. I have had sufficient of sacred subjects for to-day, and must give the rest of it to secular concerns. Oh, Nuenar !” continued the elector, a serious air suddenly succeeding to the tone of bantering pleasantry which he had just assumed, and as he spoke he flung himself on a couch beside the chair occupied by his friend, “ Is it not hard, my best friend, that I cannot be in all things what I would be, and that even in what I am, I cannot be quite what I wish ? What wild thoughts flicker in my brain ! I sometimes fancy myself more than mere humanity ; yet often, alas ! sink down to less. I feel as though my mind were cast in a mould too large for mortal man's ; as if the molten ore of intel-

lect and passion failed, ere the cavity was filled, and left the plan imperfect. Every bound of my heart tells me I was meant for happiness : yet I never have been happy. Wild, chequered hours of rapture I have felt. Power I have struggled for and gained—gained to a small extent. Every impulse of my soul leads me towards generous deeds. I have done some good, and how been paid for it ! But, oh, Adolphus, how short of all I would do or feel, had I the means of doing or enjoying ! Yet I feel destined to high things—to the most eminent reach of bliss!"

The elector started up as he spoke these words, paced the room with animated action, and looked as if a futurity of greatness and of rapture was visible to his gaze.

" You think me extravagant, Nuenar ? unbounded in my wishes—ungrateful to Heaven for what I have obtained—unworthy, perhaps, of more ?"

" I think, Ghebhard, you possess much that

might satisfy a reasonable man, and means, with good management, of gaining a great name. Archbishop in your church, elector of the empire, one among the princes of Europe, liege-sovereign of 300,000 souls, with a fertile territory, fine towns, and teeming villages, lord of the Rhine for much of its broadest and loveliest course, with large revenues, wide patronage, and great privileges."

"And with all, Adolphus, not mine own master ; nay, nor even master of myself!"

"I know not the distinction."

"'Tis not so subtle, neither. Is not the emperor my liege? but that could be borne. Is not this turbulent city, this sink of bigotry and beggary, where monks and mendicants lord it with factious burghers—is it not more sovereign over me, than I over it? And *am* I master of myself? Have not wild passions always dragged me or driven me on? Hast not thou, Nuenar, from my early youth, struggled often to save me from my own excess? I know my

faults, and thank Heaven I know the luxury of a friendship that lets me give free bent to thoughts which, if suppressed, would choke me."

With these words the elector took Count Nuenar's hand, and pressed it firmly between both of his. His phlegmatic friend betrayed no such emotions as beamed in Ghebhard's expressive and ever-varying countenance. Even while he forcibly returned the pressure, his regular features showed no play. His placid mouth did not tremble, nor did his eyes appear brighter or larger than before, like those of warmer temperaments, which gain lustre and fulness from excitement. Count Nuenar's mind, was like a bow always ready bent. Ghebhard's as the weapon's string, which if not at times relaxed, had surely snapped and broken from over tension. Either mind singly might effect much in its respective capacity ; one in resistance, the other in action, But the little enterprize of the first might fail of desired results, without

the stimulating ardour of the latter, which in its turn might overshoot the object, if left alone and unchecked by the counterpoise. But two such minds acting together for a common purpose, had every prospect of success ; and that which they were now engaged on, required all their united energy and prudence. It was the introduction of the reformed doctrines into the chapter and city of Cologne, and thence throughout the whole of that electorate, of which Ghebhard was at once the spiritual and temporal chief.

This had been the great, indeed the sole object of Count Nuenar's life, even before the appointment of his friend to the high dignity he had acquired, when scarcely turned thirty years of age. Since that period, Ghebhard, whose ambition burst through the narrow ways by which it bounded to its goal, had laboured anxiously in the cause which reason and feeling alike told him to be good. Independent of personal pride in his station, he felt sincerely the honour of

being instrumental to the enlightenment of his kind. Yet, while he laboured to make men what he believed they ought to be, he could not help despising them for being what they were. He was not one of those self-dubbed philanthropists who affect to call the beings lowest in the scale of humanity “brothers,” yet neglect every means to make them worthy of the brotherhood ; who whet the passions of the people, as mechanics sharpen their tools, wearing them out while grinding them to an edge, and *when* worn out flinging them aside among the wreck and rubbish.

Ghebhard Truchses was, in short, from birth, education, talent, reflection, and impulse, an aristocrat, as who of his station in his time—aye, or in ours—could fail to be? Conscious of superiority to the mass of his fellow men, and therefore convinced that gradations in the scale were an inevitable law of nature, he felt proudly grateful to heaven for having made him what he was, although his impassioned tempe-

rament led him sometimes, as we have seen, to murmur and complain. But he was an aristocrat of bold, broad views, not overlooking the defects of those who stood on the same elevation with himself, while gazing on the more obvious littleness of the classes that moved below him. He would have willingly seen all men on a level as to moral rights ; but the very instinct of self-preservation, as well as the exercise of reason, told him it was wiser to raise one class up than to pull the other down. He knew that the broad mass of social material might be fined gradually to a point ; but that the apex of a pyramid could not in moral, however it might in mechanical, equilibrium maintain its balance were it to be all at once reversed.

As one of the superior men who, in those early days of European freedom, saw even vaguely through the mists of political economy, which is in ours, perhaps, degenerating into political extravagance, Ghebhard Truchses is

deserving of an honourable place in history. As one of those whose virtues and faults, whose strength and whose weakness, led to adventures and vicissitudes of no ordinary interest, he merits at least the place which we would give him in its romance.

The conversation, our relation of which preceded this not unnecessary digression, was interrupted by the entrance of the kammerrath, the official functionary whose duty was to announce to his highness the service of the mid-day meal.

“Dinner! already! I had quite forgotten,” exclaimed he. “Forgive me, dear Nuenar, if the pleasure of our meeting drove from my head all other duties but that of communing with and *confessing* myself to thee.”

“Thou art quite absolved, and I not a little hungry,” replied the count; “but after the repast, Ghebhard, we have much, very much to talk over. Thou wilt not sit long, nor let the service linger?”

“ Were it but in thy honour, Adolphus, the wine-flask must circle freely ; but besides thee and Kriechlingen, I have bidden several others. Say, sir, are the dinner guests arrived ?”

“ Baron Conrad, the Italian count, and the Abbots of St. Kennett and St. Mary are already in the withdrawing room, waiting your highness’s coming,” replied the kammer-rath, or chamberlain, as we may translate the title.

“ Body of the saints ! are they ? we must bestir ourselves, Nuenar, nor keep these good folk shivering in the damp of the mould-tapestrried saloons. Let Walram wait on me !” and as the chamberlain retired, the ready valet entered the cabinet ; and the elector resumed at once the business of dressing and the conversation.

“ Aye ! methinks this violet velvet doublet goes well with the white point and spangles, and after all suits me better than the cumbrous trappings of my state. What sayest thou

Nuenar? It is Walram's own choice. Is he not a valet of infinite taste? That nod speaks approval and confirms the fiat. My ruff, now, Walram, and the Venice chain with Cellini's last-wrought medallion; I shall wear them in honour of this Italian to-day. Knowest thou, Adolphus, Count Jerome Scoti, or Scotus, or Scotin? I scarcely know which in propriety to call him, for he brings me recommendations in various languages, and from several countries."

"I have no knowledge of any such names. Those travelling counts by whom thou, Ghebhard, art so beset, rarely penetrate my solitude, even by report."

"And is it not pity, Nuenar, that a man like thee should so bury himself? one so formed to—"

"Do better in my retreat for the great cause of moral liberty, than waste myself on worldly vanities, and be the prey of each adventurer that crosses the Alps to infest our cities and

gull the simple or the vain—the lowly or the great?"

There was more animation, and more of reprobation, in the utterance of these words than was usual in the manner by which Count Nuenar was wont to check the constitutional impetuosity of his friend. But the subject now started was a sore one, for he had frequently found it necessary to interpose between Ghebhard's generous credulity and the baseness by which it was abused.

Of all the princes of his standing, not one was so celebrated for all that renders even the most lofty intellects the victims of the meanest. His love of literature and the fine arts—his idolatry of talent in men, and of beauty in women—his enthusiastic sympathy with all that he admired—his total freedom from envy or malice himself, and his slowness to suspect it in others—his open hospitality, and his love of pleasure, all combined to render the arch-

bishop-elector of Cologne the mark of the designing impostors alluded to by Nuenar.

No one, perhaps, had made so many mistaken attachments, or been so frequently deceived. The facility of his nature not only encouraged, but invited deceit. Men are oftener knaves from temptation than from temperament ; and such a character as Ghebhard's generated the evils by which he suffered, warming into life by its very splendour the reptiles which made him their prey. He had been often the dupe of men bearing false names, and women with titles to which they had no right ; but of the crowds who had for years thronged his all but kingly palaces, at Bonn, Cologne, Poppelsdorf, or Bruhl, there were few who did not give him back envy for his noble qualities, and who, in doing him wrong, did not lay the surest foundation on which to build deep hatred. It was thus that he, who of most in his station had done the least harm and greatest quantity of good to his fellows, and had most freely

shared his means, and most readily exerted his influence to promote their welfare, possessed more enemies, perhaps, than any one. But hitherto he had thoroughly despised all such. A libel or lampoon caused him not the least concern ; and as for more serious attacks, he possessed a fund of energy and courage ready to meet all drafts. No one had yet borne oftner or with more genuine dignity the baffled efforts of malignity. But he had yet known no reverse. He was buoyed high above the flood of events by a firm conviction of his good destiny. He had not yet, in fact, been thoroughly tried. He had been so little blunted by disappointment, his heart was still so warm, youth still throbbed so high in his pulse, and revelled so stirringly in his blood—for youth and age are merely relative terms, depending not on years but constitution—that he was as ripe as ever for a new attachment, as willing to trust, and as ready to be deceived. It was in this mood that he was now about to form the acquaintanceship

of one, whose celebrity is most owing to the connexion begun that very day, but who, even independent of it, is notorious for being, in the words of an old German author, “the chief wonder-master of deceit.”

Ghebhard Truchses had in a high degree the quality of enduring advice, or even reproof, from a friend. It must be an unkindly mixture of selfishness and sensitiveness that is not gratified, rather than hurt, by any such proof of sincere regard ; and there was a genuine tone in Count Nuenar’s words that left no doubt of his sincerity. Ghebhard was, moreover, pleased at every instance of animation in one so phlegmatic, from the natural feeling that makes us flattered at seeing in another the reflection of our own merits, or even faults. He only smiled, therefore, at the covert reproach contained in Nuenar’s allusion, and said in reply,—

“As you please, Adolphus ; in as far as I am concerned, lean heavy, spare not. But for a stranger, an unknown and untried man, have

mercy. This count, though he is an Italian, may be honest. His retinue is, I am told, magnificent. My letters both from Padua and Salamanca speak much of his learning and science, while that from Paris lauds his accomplishments and his honour to the highest pitch of praise. Now let's to table ; we will give fair trial ere we condemn—”

“ Or be too credulous.”

“ Nuenar, Nuenar, thou art of too cautious a kidney, an infidel as to mankind, a very Hussite in unbelief. Didst thou know English I would quote thee a verse or two, worthy to keep thee in the true faith thou owest thy fellows.”

“ Recite, recite, and then translate,” replied Nuenar, smiling in his turn, as the elector took him under the arm and led him from the cabinet.

“ Here then is the couplet—

‘ Leave reasone : believe ; wonder ;
Belife hathe maisterye, reasone is under.’ ”

repeated Gebhard, laughing, as they walked on through a long file of officers and other attendants, lay and clerical: and, just as they reached the grand saloon or withdrawing room, completing the translation of the English dog-grel into German prose.

CHAPTER IV.

THE household of the elector formed in themselves a large party. There were chaplain, and almoner, and lecturer, with several other spiritual consumers of worldly things, mixed with chamberlain, equerry, grand-master, and groom, and a long list of temporal aspirants for the grace of heaven. All these, with a dozen or more visitors, the usual number on common and quiet days, like the one in question, completed a table of about thirty covers. The grand dinners often brought together double that number at the board. But whether the company was great or small, promiscuous or select, every thing was in the truest keeping of splendid entertainment.

The elector, accompanied by Count Nuenar, entered the saloon, where his officers of state had previously received the guests ; and advancing to the circle, he addressed to each some phrase of frank yet dignified civility. To the Italian count, as of highest rank, and a stranger, he paid most marked attention, and gave the most particular welcome.

This personage was no other than he whose splendid equipage had excited so much attention that morning, as it brought up the tail of the procession. He was of tall stature, slight and well proportioned ; his complexion was different from the generality of his countrymen, and his light brown mustachios and beard were trimmed, curled, and scented, in a manner that proclaimed much care, and was correspondent with his whole personal appearance. His dress was of rich velvet, glittering with embroidery, spangles, and fillagree buttons, yet made in a fashion of such good taste, that nothing appeared overloaded or gaudy ; several jewels were

evident in various parts of his apparel, or as ornamenting the three or four crosses and stars of different orders, which hung on his breast ; and suspended round his neck in a triple coil, was a massive gold chain, “ every link of which was a thumb’s-breadth wide, and a thumb and a half long,” as is recorded by a German chronicler, and proved by the portrait painted on wood, and presented by the notorious original himself to the city of Dantzic, (in the state library of which it is placed,) and bearing this modest inscription, “ *Effig. Hieronimo Scotii Placent.*” On this authority, and some others, we state that the individual in question was not of a prepossessing countenance. His long face, pointed chin, thin lips, low, flat forehead, and piercing blue eyes, spoke a depth of serious cunning and ignoble prudence, that was strongly contrasted with the calm, grave beauty of Count Nuenar, and the still nobler but less regular expression of the elector’s broad and prominent front and features, which, taken separately, were

in no way remarkable, but in their combined effect highly so. In every other respect the stranger proved himself suited to the level of his host ; and he walked first to the dining-hall, through corridors lined with the living pageantry of state, and took his seat at table, on the elector's right hand, with the easy good breeding of one accustomed to the place of honour.

The rest of the company shewed no person of any interest in our story beyond those mentioned, and young Ulrick of Leckenstein, whose modesty prevented his mentioning his engagement for the elector's dinner, during the conversation in the balcony, lest the ladies he spoke with might have suspected him of vanity, which was, after all, and quite unknown to him, his leading foible. There was one at table with him, who soon found it out, and turned it to account, as we shall see in the sequel.

The early part of the repast went over in the common-place way usual to dinners in all ages; appetite being first attended to and satisfied,

before conversation or real conviviality commences its full flow. But, at the table of Ghebhard Truchses, the social delights of feasting were never long kept back by grosser considerations. It was there he reigned eminently conspicuous for all that was most pleasing in hospitality, good-fellowship, and talent. But his efforts on those occasions were more exerted to give scope for the capabilities of others, than to display his own. He always exercised this faculty with rare tact, and never more successfully than on the present occasion.

The Italian readily fell in with the humour of his host; and in reply to his observations concerning Paris, Padua and Salamanca, (in the several universities of which Ghebhard Truchses had pursued his early studies with great honour,) he entered on a fund of anecdote and descriptions that seemed inexhaustible. Nor did he merely speak of things as they then were, or in relation to changes which had taken place since the elector had walked the various

halls in his student's cap and gown ; but he ran fluently back upon the traces of time, spoke on matters of remotest history, and brought forward scenes and personages of centuries gone by, with a graphic power that at once delighted and amazed his listeners.

He very soon engrossed the attention of the whole company, for every one present was more or less interested in the variety of topics he touched on, embracing almost every thing in the range of then known science or art. The elector was enwrapped in delight ; even Nuenar was won over from his predisposition in the stranger's disfavour, and he listened, admired, and wondered like the rest.

" In sooth, count, you do with infinite power raise up the images of buried things. A wizard's skill could scarce do more," said the elector, as a short pause occurred after one of the stranger's spoken sketches, only broken by murmurs of applause from all parts of the table. " And my old master of rhetoric, the

venerable Joachim Montoni—how you bring him again before me ! He is now a most aged man ?”

“ Not so old, neither,” replied Scotus, as we shall call the Italian, choosing the termination of the dead, in preference to that of the living, language of his country, as most of the writers by whom he is mentioned have done, following the Latin biographer of Ghebhard Truchses.*

“ Not old !” exclaimed the elector. “ Why when I sat in his class at Padua, he numbered at least three score and ten ! and it is now—how many ? Eighteen, aye nineteen years since then ! Is not that an aged man ?”

“ Comparatively, yes,” answered Scotus, carelessly, but with a look of so strange a meaning as made all near him stare, first at him, and then at each other. But the Italian’s look was unexplained, and not commented on at the moment.

* De actis et fatis, Gebhardi Truchesii. Davide Koelero. Altorf, 1645.

“ Your highness might, perchance, like to see the professor’s hand-writing when he was a younger man than even when you listened to his lectures ?” said Scotus, drawing from his doublet a most antique-looking parchment-covered book of small dimensions, fastened with brazen clasps of curious workmanship.

“ I should be glad of any memento of a man I loved so well,” replied the elector, “ and particularly of characters traced by his own hand, the letter you were the bearer of being written by that of his secretary. This seems a rare volume of manuscript. Its shrivelled leaves have the true stains of antiquity : it is as old, methinks, as Joachim Montini’s self.”

“ If your highness were to examine it a little, you might believe it to be older.”

“ Ah, here is the professor’s signature indeed, and the date 1527, more than fifty years back. This seems to be a curious collection of autographs,” remarked the elector, turning over the leaves.

"Yes, I love to gather these contributions from memorable men."

"Gather their contributions!" said Truchses.
"Gather them! Why here is Raphael's; here Dante's; here Ariosto's name! If gathered, it must have been in the grave!"

"It is easier to outlive one's friends than to give new life to the dead!" said Scotus, with a solemnity of tone so strongly contrasted with his previous animation that the whole company felt a thrill of awe, in unison with the almost supernatural meaning implied in the expression.

"Outlive one's friends!—And what are we to infer from that, count?" said the elector, smiling as he observed the half awe-struck looks of his guests;—but he could not see his own.

"Whatever may seem most pleasing to your highness," replied the Italian, with an air of resignation and modesty that seemed mixed with sorrow.

"The great Raphael died full half a century

ago ; you are not quite so old methinks, count ?" said Nuenar, with a sarcastic smile.

" I am glad you find me worthy of a thought, sir," said the Italian.

" And the immortal Dante closed his life in thirteen hundred and thirty-one, two centuries and a half ago," observed one of the abbotts who sat on Scotus's right hand.

" In thirteen hundred and *twenty*-one, reverend father," rejoined the latter, " and was born in twelve hundred and sixty-five. He who followed the hearse of the man, and has rocked the cradle of the child, may be accurate as to dates of him he loved and honoured."

The Italian checked himself here, sighed, and passed his hand across his brow. No one replied ; no one could, no one in fact dared trust themselves to speak.

At this moment a servant announced to the Italian that his secretary waited without, with letters just arrived by the post. Scotus, with an air of much good breeding, requested per-

mission of the elector to retire, for the purpose of their perusal. The latter insisted on his receiving, and if he chose it, reading them at table. The secretary was accordingly introduced, and he put several missives into his master's hand. The latter placed them loosely before him on the table, selecting one, which he begged leave to open ; and as the elector inclined his head, in persuasion rather than assent, he could not help being struck with the address—

“ TO NOBODY,”

which was written in large characters on the back of the letter. His excited curiosity made him look at the others. One was directed in characters which appeared to be Chinese ; another bore the word “Cologne,” and no more. The rest were covered so as to defy casual scrutiny ; but these which were visible had all the usual marks of the post regulations distinctly and legibly stamped.

“ Does your highness know that hand-

writing?" asked Scotus, as he carelessly broke the seal of another, and shewed a close written epistle to the elector.

"It should be that of his majesty Philip II. of Spain, if I err not," was the reply.

"Your highness is right," said Scotus, shewing the signature of the despot, which Ghebhard was well acquainted with.

"And this?" continued he, tearing away the heavy seal from another, and pointing to the name at foot.

"That is Elizabeth's of England!" exclaimed the astonished elector.

"Even so," said Scotus. He then placed his letters within the breast of his doublet, having hastily glanced at their contents, dismissed his secretary, who walked carelessly round the table, and left the room at the side opposite to his master.

What were the impressions made, or intended to be made by all this? That the stranger, a man of evidently prodigious knowledge and

a high order of talent, was in familiar correspondence with the most powerful sovereigns existing, had been the friend and associate of some of the most celebrated geniuses, of present and past times, and moreover, that he was at least three hundred years old !

That he succeeded to a great extent is certain. On some points there could be no doubt ; of others there was strong presumption. Every one present believed much of what they heard, and several were willing to credit all that was implied. It was still a most credulous age. When we throw back our mind's vision on the facts of history and the failings of mankind, and fix it on an epoch so comparatively near our own ; when we reflect on the advances made by science and the arts, even before those days, on the great political events and the vast combinations of mental power in action at the very time, and on the marvellous similarity of men and measures then and now, we are lost in wonder, that the human intellect could, on

some points have been so profoundly dark, or so copiously saturated with almost incredible superstitions:

Among other still common shadows of belief, for they had never been embodied into the solid absurdity of “Articles,” was “the grand magistry” as it was pompously called, “the philosopher’s stone,” another of its vague mystifying titles, or the power of converting base metals into gold, and that of compounding the elixir of eternal life. A powerful writer of our own days has embodied the miseries of this grand secret, in a way sufficient to deter the most ambitious of those who laugh at it as chimerical. But even such a writer, two or three centuries back, would have failed to frighten the great mass of believers who followed, or were haunted by, the phantom. We want nothing more to impress us with contempt for our kind, than the crowds who are at all times ready to live and die for the current superstitions of their day. There was scarce one man at the table of

Ghebhard Truchses, on that in question, who was not disposed rather to credit than to scout the monstrous prodigy of which Jerome Scotus was anxious to be considered the illustration. Even the elector himself, elevated as he was in talent, and distinguished for his acquirements, was not quite proof against the prevalent influence. He saw that his new-made acquaintance was, at any rate, a man of more than common capabilities ; and mixed with his cordial admiration of talent was that strange and latent waywardness, not uncommon to enthusiastic minds, a willingness to be deceived.

But, however Ghebhard Truchses and his friends might have been disposed, or acted on, we will not attempt to play on our readers by any artifice. We at once denounce Jerome Scotus and his doings for what they were ; him for a vile adventurer, and they a well-woven tissue of cheatery. Readers of our days, or at least those for whom we would write, have no sympathy for, and find no charms in, events

or characters wrapped in a veil of magical delusions. If our heroes or heroines have been too credulous, we neither expect nor wish our readers to be so too. In striving to give them amusement, and perhaps information, we would not treat them as dupes. We shall, therefore, detail events, without endeavouring to torture them into mysteries.

At the period of our tale, and for some time previous, France and the more northern parts of Europe were overrun by Italian intriguers and impostors, introduced into Paris under the patronage of Catherine de Medicis, and thence spread abroad in all directions. The cleverness of these adventurers was proverbial. There were few of them who were not proficient in all the juggleries of legerdemain, who could not cast nativities, and make an imposing show of knowledge in judicial astrology and alchemy. The most highly accomplished of such persons in all those illusory arts was Jerome Scotus. He soon made for himself a base notoriety; and

his most eminent victims, in Germany at least, counted among them names in which we hope our readers even already feel some interest.

The first individual of note, on whom he ventured openly to practise his arts, was Ghebhard Truchses. He had made himself master of the character, tastes, and habits of the elector. He had procured some real, and forged other letters of recommendation for his intended dupe. For he had acquired acquaintanceships with some eminent persons, by means of his learning, talents, and impudence ; and there were few of any celebrity whose hand-writing he had not seen, and could not imitate. He was aware of the elector's predilection for all that was sumptuous ; and the equipage and train with which he appeared at Cologne was such as would have done honour to a sovereign prince. He had arrived there the evening before the procession, and had taken up his lodging in the house of the burgomaster, Johann Hilpaert, one of the wealthiest merchants in the city, and to

whom he was recommended in the highest terms, by individuals of great worth in Hamburg, from which place he stated himself to have come in a direct line.

Now, this Hilpaert, was the most bitter, and withal the most powerful, enemy of the elector-archbishop, and the leading agent of the town council, in all the intrigues fomented by Ernest of Bavaria, Bishop of Liege, who, "nothing loth," was urged on, by both high and low supporters, as a candidate for the dignity enjoyed by Ghebhard Truchses.

The latter had, in his turn, counter-agents in the city, by whom, and through the medium of his household officers, he was speedily informed of the movements of his opponents. At the important crisis of the congress, when some of the wiliest diplomatists of Europe were assembled, when the intrigues of all Germany, Spain, and the low countries were in active operation, and when every one concerned knew himself to move in a maze of trick and trea-

chery, it behoved all, and none more than Ghebhard Truchses, to be on his guard, and to counteract by every fair means at least—and what a wide latitude does diplomacy give to the term! the chicanery which spread its tangled meshes abroad. It is not, then, to be wondered at that the elector had immediate information of the arrival of so apparently important a personage, and so large a retinue as clattered up to the gate of Hilpaert's residence; nor that he, in acknowledgment of the honourable recommendations sent to his palace almost immediately by their bearer, had despatched an instant invitation for the dinner on the following day, at which we have taken the opportunity of bringing the stranger to our readers' notice.

Nor will it, we trust, be thought derogatory to the high feeling of our hero, for such is Ghebhard Truchses, if we acknowledge that independent of his prompt sentiment of hospitality, there was a less quick but as sure an instinct at work, telling him to use his natural right of

reducing the ranks of his enemies and recruiting his own, by every advantageous and honourable alliance. Who or what Count Jerome Scotus was he knew not quite, from the general vague tone of the letters he brought. But as some of them bore the signatures of functionaries of the courts of France and Spain, he had no doubt of his importance. Of the Italian's objects in appearing at Cologne at this critical moment he could have no fixed opinion ; but he little doubted that they were in some way connected with the proceedings of the Congress, although he was no ostensible member of it. Political curiosity thus aided the operations of the other motives which led to the elector's ready attentions ; and the impression made on his energetic sense of action by his guest, was such as to decide him to push them to the very limits of prudent hospitality.

Jerome Scotus having, by the tricks of conversation, by inuendo and pause and emphasis, grafted on the stock of a ready wit and bound-

less information, wound up his listeners to whatever pitch he chose, soon proceeded to convince them that he was not a mere pretender—that he could do as well as talk.

His first trick of legerdemain was practised on the good and bold Baron Conrad Von Kriechlingen, who sat opposite to him, leaning on both elbows, staring with all his eyes, twisting his long grizzled mustachios, and moving the lower jaw and firm-closed lips, with that species of action which in cattle is called chewing the cud. Scotus wore several rings, and among others one garnished the thumb of his left hand, a brilliant of remarkable size, so much so, that the elector, becoming more familiar as the flasks of Rhein-wine were quickly emptied and rapidly replaced by full ones, asked permission of his guest to examine it more closely. When he got it into his hands, he found that, however fine the stone, the setting was of corresponding merit.

“ This must be Cellini’s work ? ” said he ;

"none but the wayward head of Benvenuto's self could have imagined, and no fingers less expert than his could have wrought such a curious and exquisitely carved device."

"It has ever been my pride to encourage rising genius and to bear its records about me," observed Scotus, examining in his turn the elector's chain and medallion, the workmanship of the master-hand just named; while the ring was passed round the table from one admiring guest to another.

The somewhat inquisitive and not very clear-headed abbot of St. Kennett's, the Italian's right hand neighbour, unsatisfied it would seem by what had already taken place relative to Raphael and Dante, was resolved to try Scotus's meaning, by the test of another chronological remark.

"You talk, count, of *rising* genius," observed he; "now, if my memory does not fail me, your celebrated countryman, Cellini, was born in 1500, and died in 1570; consequently,

to have given encouragement to his early efforts you must have patronized him full forty years ago ; and methinks that is at least ten years more than your baptism certificate would count for ?”

“ Reverend abbott, the hoop in which that brilliant is set was chased by Benvenuto’s apprentice hand.”

“ And yet made to your order, count ?”

No answer was given to this direct question. The whole company looked grave again. But the elector was resolved not to let any heavy cloud rest long over his board. He saw into the object of his guest, as clearly as our readers do by this time ; and he individually felt quite indifferent whether Count Jerome was believed to be a man of thirty, or as old as Methusaleh.

“ Well, Kriechlingen, is not that a rare gem ?” said he, as Baron Conrad eyed the ring, and turned it in his hand with great attention.

“ In truth it is, your highness,” replied the baron ; “ and the chased setting worthy of the

diamond. It is long since I have seen its like."

"And where, or when, noble sir, have you ever happened to see its like?" asked the Italian, with a look so keen as to put the worthy baron in some degree out of countenance.

"Nay, I said not I had ever actually seen a gem decidedly the same; but yet it seems to me that I once was struck with nearly, if not quite such a one, on the forefinger of the great Maurice of Saxony, brother of the present elector, and uncle of the Duchess Anne of Saxe-Coburg."

"Indeed!" said Scotus, with a sneering tone, "and are you, noble baron, quite sure that the elector's ring did not pass into your own possession?"

"Into my possession! I do not understand you, count. What do you mean?"

"Oh, nothing," answered Scotus, with that provokingly cool air which blows the temper of an irritable man into absolute flame.

“ Nothing ! what, is it nothing to accuse me.”—

“ Hold, hold, Von Kriechlingen !” exclaimed the elector with the tone of friendly authority, irresistible to his choleric guest—“ no accusation could be ventured, no offence meant, to your honour in my presence and at my table—you are too hasty.”

“ I hope I am, your highness,—but still, under your favour, this insinuation must be explained.”

“ Patience, patience, baron, it may explain itself,” calmly observed Scotus ; while the ring, having made its round, reached the abbot of St. Kennett’s by his side, the pious churchman being at the moment occupied in an interchange of sarcastic winking and nodding of the head with his brother the abbot of St. Mary’s, both not a little tickled at the evident annoyance of Kriechlingen, whom they devoutly hated, as the head of the heretic party in the chapter.

“ Verily this is a trinket of worth ; and well might it be for the soul of the Elector Maurice

had he offered its likeness to the shrine of some holy saint, instead of wearing it, in the vanity of his heart, which knew little of the honour due to mother church," said the clumsy abbot, taking this round-about way of adding to the baron's vexation, and turning towards his more silent brother for applause, while at the same time he laid the ring on the table, close beside Scotus.

"Holy father abbot," said the latter gravely, "whatever may have been the inclinations of the great Maurice, mine do not urge me to deck St. Kennett's altar with my thumb-ring brilliant, to expiate either the elector's errors or my own. Therefore, in all humility, I crave your reverence to restore to me the trinket."

"What! me! restore it!" exclaimed the priest, bustling and fidgetting on his chair, and looking among the glasses on the table, and in the folds of his robe, with great agitation, "may the blessed eleven thousand be my guard! but I placed the gem here, beside you, count, not an instant gone."

"So!" said Scotus, with the strongest emphasis possible to be laid on that favourite and ambiguous German interjection—" Yet it is not there now."

"Holy St. Kennett! It is not indeed!" cried the abbot, his face reddening to a most fiery tinge.

"His reverence's countenance, stuck up in the shrine of his saint, might rival the great ruby in the crown of King Melchior, and serve a good turn to Elector Maurice in purgatory," said Kriechlingen, across the table, to Nuenar, who with more prudence made no reply to the irreverent sally; not the less enjoying the abbot's confusion, and his more suspicious temper going even farther than the baron's sarcasm to the churchman's disfavour.

"Why how is this mistake? Let the ring be found!" said the elector, turning to the attendants, with a look of severe authority; "there is surely no rogue, nor yet any juggler in the room?"

"Not so unlikely—and two fat abbots at the board!" murmured Kriechlingen, laughing at length outright, at the now boisterous protestations of the churchman that he knew nothing of the fate of the missing ring.

"Heed it not, heed it not, good father," said Scotus, "it is not worthy of a thought, and scarcely of being worn by a mortal sinner like me, much less by the effigy of the blessed St. Kennett."

"Not worthy! mother of man! it is a jewel of price, and if found again—I warrant me the holy saint will think well of accepting it for an offering—if such be the meaning of your words."

A renewed burst of laughter from Kriechlingen was the only answer to this suggestion.

"I esteem the bauble as nought, reverend abbot," said Scotus—"it will no doubt be found—but in the mean time, perhaps, the worthy baron yonder will let us look on its similitude, which was once the pride of the Elector of Saxony, as he tells us?"

"What! do you again utter this insinuation?" exclaimed old Conrad, no longer restraining his ire. "Do you mean to charge me with"—

"Pray baron, keep cool, and put your hand into the left side pocket of your haut-de-chausses," resumed Scotus, with great calmness.

"Put my hand in my pocket! what would you mean by that? By Heavens!"—cried the angry baron, at the same moment instinctively thrusting his hand into the ample pouch of his wide-sashed nether garments—as a man is sure to touch his chin if another talks of shaving.

"Eh? What the fiend! The holy martyrs preserve me! What is this?" were the next rapid exclamations of the almost bewildered baron, as he pulled out of its hiding-place, and held up to view a ring, which seemed identical with the article that had caused so much confusion. When he recovered himself a little, and the expression of surprise which burst from the company had subsided, he

continued, “ This is witchcraft—this is not fair play ! By the oath and honour of a soldier, I know not what to make of it ! Abbot of St. Kennett’s, you have played me a spiteful trick ! Count Scotus, what is this ? Take back your accursed ring, and free me from a spell—for such must hang over me.”

The abbot shrunk aside and crossed himself, as Kriechlingen flung the ring across the table. Scotus caught it as it rolled towards him, and turning to the elector, said—

“ May it please your highness to permit a hammer to be brought me ; I will relieve the conscience of the soldier and the alarm of the priest.”

A sign from the elector sufficed for one of the attendants to leave the room, and to return immediately with the required instrument, which he placed in the Italian’s hands. The latter had, in the mean time, touched a spring, which forced the diamond from its setting. He placed the glittering gem on his napkin ; and

before the elector could interfere to prevent the blow, he reduced it to dust by one heavy stroke.

A volley of exclamations of surprise and regret burst from all sides, but none were so loud, or had their source so deep, as those of the Abbot of St. Kennett's.

“Holy saints ! what a pity ! A jewel worth a thousand *moutons d'or* if it was worth one ! Oh, count, count, why did you not rather give it to me for the shrine of my blessed patron, than do this—almost sacrilegious deed—this almost heathenish sacrifice ? Jesu Maria ! a thousand pieces of gold lost to our abbey for ever !—that is, as I would say, a precious ornament of that value at least, lost to the statue of the saint. The hand of Satan is in this ; for how else did the bauble find its way to the baron's breeches pocket ? But why do I ask ? the evil one and his imps know where to nestle !”

To prevent a retort, which Kriechlingen was preparing—having been set greatly at his ease

by the demolition of what he considered the enchanted jewel—and to give the finishing stroke to the wonderment he had already excited, Scotus, with the same calm tone he had observed throughout, begged the abbot to be consoled, for that perhaps the gem was not inevitably destroyed.

“ How not destroyed ?” exclaimed the dissatisfied priest. “ Did I not see the precious stone reduced to powder ? Is not its respected dust covered by that napkin, like a winding-sheet over a corpse ? Ah, 'twas a wanton robbery of the church ! You have not done well in this, Count Scotus ! You have not done well in this !”

“ Faith may work a miracle, reverend father.”

“ Faith may work a fiddlestick ! The saints forgive me ; but I am sore vexed at this foolish trick.”

“ Come, father, be of better cheer. Blow a breath on this twisted napkin,” said Scotus,

holding up his own close to the abbot's face.

"What does this mean? Take it away, take it away! I cannot, with patience, see a man play the fool with his own fortune, and make light of the saint's loss—a miracle, indeed!"

"Nay, blow one breath, holy sir!"

"Thére, then, there; and Heaven forgive your extravagant mummery, and send you more sense than you seem to want money!" said the abbot, disinclined to refuse any request of his now very questionable neighbour, and giving a hoarse puff on the napkin, with all the force of his lungs. At the same moment Scotus turned it inside out, by a dextrous twist and a quick shake; and lo! the wonderful ring appeared in all its brilliancy, shining in primitive innocence, as though magic had never worked wonders upon it.

An electric thrill ran through the witnesses of this feat. Old Kriechlingen jumped from

his seat. The abbot of St. Kennett's fairly started up, and quitted the table abruptly, calling loudly on his patron to grant him protection from the snares of the evil one, who must, he declared, be abroad. Scotus quietly put his ring on his thumb, shook his napkin with an indifferent air, and answered some expressions of applause at his dexterity, on the part of the elector, by an assurance that it was but child's play in comparison with what he had the gift of performing.

And this was true. The art of sleight-of-hand, by which this clever conjurer had concealed his really valuable ring, and made it reappear whole and sound when his trick was completed, was but a trifling specimen of his skill, and has been a thousand times surpassed since his days. But it was first-rate jugglery then. The reader will have divined that the accomplice-secretary slipped the counterpart ring into the baron's breeches pocket, when he was leaving the room after the delivery of the

letters to his roguish master, and that this counterpart was also a counterfeit, Scotus possessing the secret of making false diamonds of paste, a secret practised with great effect a century later than his time, by the notorious Marquis St. Germain, who sported with many a credulous dupe, pretty much in the manner of his great original, and who has had in his turn numerous imitators, up to the impostors of our own days.

"And will not your reverence accept this poor offering for the shrine?" said Scotus, advancing towards the abbot in mock humility, and holding forth the ring.

"Offer me no offering! Avaunt! *Apage Sathanas!*" exclaimed the half-terrified priest, spitting on the ground—a pious, but rather ill-bred species of practical exorcism—and retreating towards the door, which had been already gained by the abbot of St. Mary's. "The Virgin forbid that our sacred shrine should be polluted by the devil's handy-work! No, no!"

Sooner would I strip the sacred statue stark naked, and throw its consecrated treasures into the Rhine, than lay a finger on that unholy thing ! *Sancta Maria ora pro me !*"

"Reverend brothers in grace, you do not quit me so soon ? Ye will not break up our party for this harmless trait of hand-trickery ?" said the elector, following the retreating ecclesiastics, with a smile, which he could not resist, yet meant no offence by.

"Not quit your highness, when enchantment wraps you round ! not break away from a party in which Beelzebub is the chief guest ! Ah, woe is the day, with due respect to your highness's station I say it, when magic and sorcery find a patron in the archbishop's palace, and heresy is mixed up with devilry at the table of our spiritual Lord !

Nulla salus est in domo
Nisi cruce munit homo !

Alas, and alack for the true faith, when cope, crosier, mitre, and dalmatica, are flung aside

for temporal trappings—when spells and charms and heathenish signs are fostered in the house which should be holy! Come brother, come! We pray your highness's excuse—and when we betake us to our exorcisms by and by, I promise your highness that the sprinkling of the holy water and the prayers for grace shall not be unmixed with beseechings to our blessed patron that your highness may be snatched from your too manifest delusions, for the glory of mother church, and the saving of your own soul."

With the utterance of this tirade, the abbot of St. Kennett and his brother-priest hurried away, crossing themselves and jostling the irreverend attendants, and repeating aloud fragments of the saints' litany and counter-spells against magic, until they fairly cleared the porch of the archiepiscopal palace.

The half-heretic elector threw up his hands as the churchmen quitted the room, as if in the action of giving them his blessing, but with a shake of the head which spoke the mockery that

prompted the movement. A burst of laughter from all present was the accompaniment. Kriechlingen, and Nuenar even, could not resist that unseemly explosion of disrespect to the representatives of the priesthood whose authority they had renounced ; while the reverend individuals of the household, though for the most part Catholics, relieved of the presence of those spiritual drawbacks to mirth, joined in the loud chorus which they knew well would in no way be discordant to their host, in either his temporal or spiritual capacity.

The places at table were quickly resumed. The depths of the elector's cellar poured forth their choicest samples. The revelry went on. Conrad of Kriechlingen was soon reconciled to the trick he had been the subject of, though still sorely puzzled by fruitless attempts to fathom it. Count Nuenar forgot his anxiety for private converse with Ghebhard Truchses. Young Leckenstein was false to an appointed visit to his fair cousin and beloved mistress.

Von Heyen neglected the duty of parade. The whole company in short, were spell-bound under the influence of Jerome Scotus; who, encouraged by the elector, and urged by the rest, continued till night had nearly set in to astonish and delight the whole party, by feats of skill and proofs of talent, as varied as they were wonderful.

CHAPTER V.

IT may be well, in reference to the powers and practices of our conjuror, and to the effects which they produced on the destiny of our hero, to sketch briefly the state of feeling which then prevailed on the subject of magic and its various accessories, and to trace the nature of its influence on such a mind as that of Ghebhard Truchses.

In earlier ages than that which forms the epoch of our tale, necromancy and the arts of the cabalist were considered as philosophical pursuits, rather than as deeds of demonology. Theurgy, so often confounded with these, is in its proper signification the power of doing super-

natural things by lawful means, such as prayer to Heaven, acts of penance, and devotional exercises ; and the study of the occult sciences, as implied in that term, was far from being considered infamous. Their most celebrated professors were, on the contrary, men of piety, the cell of the monk being most often the astrologer's studio, or the alchymist's den.

It was not till religious differences opened men's minds, while they hardened their hearts, that keen distinctions began to be made between what was lawful in science and what was not ; that the useful arts were separated from the unholy ; and that men agreed on what should be objects of veneration and what of odium.

The intense avidity with which those studies, in all their phases, were followed by the Jews—that race marked out for reprobation by monstrous prejudices, which are even yet by no means extinct—seems the first cause which excited the hatred of the church against them. As long as magic was exclusively the pursuit of

the priesthood Christianity found nothing in it repugnant to the true faith ; but when the Hebrew sage turned his deep scrutiny into the fathomless depths, then were its professors denounced as degraded beings, who bought their knowledge at the price of their own damnation.

Yet, even then, it was not attempted to deny the reality of the science. The priests, in abandoning it to other professors, took care to encourage the popular belief in its genuineness ; but that merely to make it and its followers objects of abhorrence, and to give themselves the credit of a counteracting power, more mighty than that which they renounced.

It was thus, in the progress of deception, that exorcisms, incantations, and counter-charms, came into vogue. The church, instead of endeavouring to enlighten the world, drew an additional blind before the beam that was beginning to pierce through. She long hesitated to call in the power of legal statutes or common penalties, to crush the romantic superstitions which

she preferred to combat by those which are called religious. And, therefore, the orthodox world was only balanced between two equally absurd and baneful attractions; and the human mind was pressed down by a double weight.

When, however, the Reformation burst broadly on the benighted nations, the monstrous monopoly of Rome took the alarm; and bull after bull was launched forth, by successive pontiffs, with the avowed object of combining sorcery and heresy in a common anathema. Terrific persecutions took place on the continent, against those joint abominations. Both became equally abhorrent to the good and bigoted Catholic, who considered the man that disbelieved in transubstantiation, or ate flesh on a Friday, as on a level of infamy with him who was supposed to have fiends and demons at his back, and to have sold himself to the devil for the knowledge of the black art.

The two great sects of Reformers in the sixteenth century took diametrically different views

of the question of magic, as indeed of most others. The Calvinists looked with scornful rage upon the venal quackery of the mother church ; and considered her exorcisms, and other rites, to the full as idolatrous as the arts they were directed against were admitted to be damnable. The Lutherans, on the contrary, including the leading divines of the Anglican church, treated as absolute impostures those pretended magical powers, which the mother church affected to admit that she might turn her protection against them to profit ; and which the Calvinists fostered the belief in, for the ferocious delight of putting them down by persecution.

It was thus that the juggleries of Jerome Scotus, displayed before the reforming elector, Ghebhard, and his Lutheran friends, and the nominal Catholics whose opinions were so influenced by his, were considered rather in the light of venial tricks than serious crimes. And if some awful misgivings arose at times, as to his mysterious skill, his apparently enormous wealth,

or his implied pretension to uncommon and unnatural age, each man who felt such—and there was scarce one who was entirely free from them—strove to shake it off, and to combat the doubts which he despised.

The one exception to this state of feeling was Count Nuenar. His stern, dry, and unromantic mind was quite proof against the delusions of magic. It was like a rock, through which no stream of sentiment or fancy ever trickled. High principle was its only impulse, and it repelled every weakness, no matter what their source. Nuenar believed this to be the realization of true mental greatness. But he was wrong; for the coldest temperaments have their delusions as well as the warmest. He quite mistook the standard of mortal perfection, which, if there be such at all, admits of no extremes. A statue is not more human than a shadow. Some hands feel rather like warmed marble than like glowing flesh. And the brain that is never obscured by the vapours of fancy, can never be

refreshed by the dews into which they dissolve. These are unconnected and broken images. If put together they may give some notion of the character of Count Nuenar.

We would not willingly tire our readers by this kind of moral anatomy. It is better to let our personages develop their minds in action. But analysis and definition are indispensable in the most dramatic narrative. On the stage, their place is supplied by actual personification ; and in writing for that arena, the great skill consists in what to leave unsaid. In such as this, it is to say what is necessary, in its proper place. Ambitious of that aim, without presuming to hope that we take it exactly, we may add a few words more as to our hero in contrast with his friend.

Weaknesses of various kinds seem inseparable from minds of great energy. We need not ransack history for examples—they rise up at every step on the path of life—nor drag in metaphysical theories to embarrass what baffles re-

search. We sometimes, it is true, meet men who are more like graven images of man ; beings whose clay seems to have been kneaded with some indurating essence, that hardens them against the susceptibilities of humanity. Individuals of that stamp may display power, they never reach to greatness. But it has been already acknowledged that our hero had more than one weakness ; and, if he had not, he had never been a hero of ours.

Ghebhard Truchses was a believer in destiny. A man who was firmly persuaded that he had started in life under the influence of a favourable omen, might easily be led to believe—or to wish to believe—in good or evil stars, and to give credit to the pretenders who boasted a knowledge of their mysteries. It was, in truth, this vague and undefinable desire to trust to supernatural agencies that acted on Ghebhard Truchses, rather than direct and positive belief. His proud and ambitious spirit, acknowledging the humiliations of mere mortality, longed to feel

itself in the care of some occult guardianship, even at the risk of being made its sport. He was not satisfied with the superintendance of a providence that watched over all alike. He had benevolence enough to wish that all men were his fellows, aye, and to labour for their improvement. But, conscious of his comparative advantages, he instinctively encouraged the hope that superior minds were under separate influences—and this was the extent of his superstition.

A man so cunning as Scotus could not fail to discover the true nature of this weakness, even had he not been previously acquainted with its existence. But aware of it as he was, and resolved to work on it for his own designs, he managed with great tact the introduction of the subject it hinged on. He contrived to let astrology slip in, as it were, to the general discourse in which he took the lead ; and when the elector caught the bait, and urged the question with his usual impetuosity, the wily Italian re-

plied casually and coldly, turning into other topics, when he had just said enough to keep that predominant in his mind.

Between the several acts of sleight-of-hand with which Scotus astonished the company after the departure of the abbots, he skilfully introduced anecdotes illustrative of the secrets of alchymy and other arts, which, like legerdemain, he seemed to have at his fingers' ends. The writers on the hermetic philosophy were the familiars he called up to aid his enchantments. Tremegistus the Egyptian; Geber the Arab; Raymond Lully the multiplier; Villanova, Gustenhover, and a hundred others, were made to dance before his auditors in the vapoury maze of their own imaginings, until at length every one present, more or less, believed himself convinced of something—he knew not exactly what—as dreamers continue to be, even after their visions are dissolved.

“ Well, count, that fact is explained with truly marvellous skill,” said the Baron Von

Kriechlingen, hiccupping the while, as he swallowed a bumper from his capacious, thick-shanked, and embossed green glass—"Marvellous! There can be small doubt, methinks, but that that same preparation of double mercury, which you so clearly prove to have been the invention of the learned Drivilan"—

"Trevisan, uncle;" said young Leckenstien, who had caught up carefully every word that dropped from Scotus, by whose side he had for a long time been sitting.

"Well, boy, with all my heart, Trevisan or Drevizan, it's all the same, isn't it? Isn't it count, I appeal to you—isn't it all the same?"

"To you, baron, certainly," said Scotus.

"Exactly—and I am only giving my own opinion, which quite agrees with that great alchymist Drevizan, as to the effects of this double preparation of scamony"—

"A preparation of double mercury," whispered Leckenstein.

"Ulrick, don't interrupt me, I say!" ex-

claimed old Conrad. “ Am I, your mother’s brother, to be whipped up in this—hiccup ! way—by a snappish boy of a—hiccup ! nephew ? By the beard of St. Boniface, I’ll not bear it ! and as I was saying, Count—as I was saying—as—Ulrick, boy, what was I saying ? Tell me now, out of all your college reading, you idle dog, what is the best stuff to make the real projecting powder—the *lapis Philosophorum* ? can you tell me that, eh ?”

“ Drink, brave Conrad, drink and be wise ! Fill, all a bumper to the honour of the great Trevisan !” exclaimed the elector, enjoying highly the fuddled state of the baron’s ideas, and cheering him and his companions on, to the running down of their own intellects, as a huntsman tantivies his hounds.

“ But your double mercury, and your great Trevisan, have not stood the test, methinks ? If I have heard aright the opinion of his highness just now, the mixture of mercury with gold, of Basil Valentine, has the rather ob-

tained his noble suffrage," profoundly observed a pursy, drowsy, old toad-eater, one of the chapter, who always supported the opinion of the man at whose table he fed, but whose name has not been handed down to posterity.

"I differ—hiccup! flatly with that"—said old Kriechlingen, who was one of those independent spirits that invariably oppose the last speaker, particularly when wine inflamed his pertinacity; and he had now undoubtedly entered into a new labyrinth of explanation, had not the elector stopped his course.

"Come friends, come!" cried the latter, in his clearest tone of convivial melody; "no more of this. Wine, wine is the true philosopher's stone—for to-day, at least. Let metals, and alkalies, and vegetables yield their claims for the discovery of the grand arcanum. This amber essence of Rudesheim is the true transmuting power, turning our very thoughts to gold, and giving to joy an ever-living spring. Fill, friends, fill!"

“ Under your highness’s favour, I—hiccup ! I don’t agree—I say—hiccup ! that Hocheimer”—

“ His highness is right, his highness is right. Essences before alkalies, juices in preference to bodies, were also the choice of”—

“ Now, then, a bumper to beauty !” cried the elector, knowing well the best method to stop the mouths of both the baron and the parasite ; and giving a free flow to his own animated and amorous feelings. “ Up, up to the brim ! Let each man think of her he loves—or loved—it is a toast for all ages—friends do it honour !” And the enthusiasm of the elector as he filled and drank, gave proof that the sentiment came from his very soul.

And what man—particularly what German—in those days had *not* done honour to the double inspiration of beauty and wine ? Let us give to civilization the credit of its miracles. Let refinement receive its due praise, for softening the manners of mankind, and hallowing the sweet hypocrisies of social life. But let us not

forget the merits of other times—the worth of other systems—the racy vigour with which men felt and acted, the bold sincerity with which they spoke and sinned. “There is truth in wine,” was not then a mere proverb. It was a reality ; for then there was truth in man. His follies and his vices walked the day broadly, like honest libertines, scorning to skulk in the twilight obscurity of cant. The glaring crimes of those days were more shocking, but not half so demoralizing as the mean vices of our own ; for they carried their condemnation and their remedy in their very doing. The emasculating fopperies, the unsocial chill of high, and the servile monkeyisms of middle life, the blight of sentiment and passion—the selfishness, the envy, the dissimulation of modern times—all these do more to unman mankind, than the generous faults of a less deceitful age had done to make it monstrous.

Manners have known so many changes since the world began to roll, that it is hard to fix

a distinguishing epithet on any given epoch. There have been many a golden, and an iron, and a brazen age. Darkness and light have succeeded each other in pretty regular succession. But the times of which we treat—the midway period between the gloom of feudalism and the blaze of liberty—furnish scenes and characters, free from fierce savageness on the one hand, or cunning selfishness on the other. Exceptions there were, of course, as there ever must be to general rules. But candour, at least, that jewel beyond price, was in the common affairs of life, a leading principle. Men avowed openly, what, for the sake of morals had better, perhaps, have been concealed. But how often is not true dignity sacrificed to affected decency?

A Christian archbishop giving amorous toasts at his own table, is a spectacle revolting to existing notions of propriety. But we must remember the character of the times as well as that of the man, and bear in mind that

Truchses was a temporal prince, as well as a christian hierarch.

Among the wassailers who did honour to his highness's superior wine, there was not one flincher. Even Nuenar was, on such occasions, a true German ; and Scotus, though he could not claim that title for excess, easily naturalized himself in any country or custom, when he had an object to gain. On the present occasion, he drank deeply and talked warmly ; but with little effect on either his head or heart. The disciples of modern dandyism could not afford a more cold-blooded illustration of self-command.

“ Yes, your highness, yes ! beauty *is* divine ;” said he, in reply to some glowing phrase from the elector ; “ divine in its essence, its attributes, and its powers. Its origin is heaven, its temple the human heart. There we may worship it, and there find irresistible reasons for making its possession the first grand aim of man.”

"I say no—no—no!" stammered Von Kriechlingen, from the opposite side of the table.

"Hush! the elector has not given his judgment on the sentiment!" exclaimed the toad-eater.

"A fico for his judgment, or your's, or any man's, who says yes when I say no! Its false sentiment and bad logic, I say"—

"Hush, his highness speaks."

"True, count," said Ghebhard Truchses, with a sigh, and not heeding the interruptions we have noticed. "True, our hearts are always rife with reasons to justify our desires. Alas, that our heads should so often refuse to sanctify the fiat!"

"Methinks, your highness, there are cases in which there is little wisdom in appealing from the breast to the brain."

"Think you so, indeed? you have seen much of life, and deeply into the human mind. And think you that happiness is to be found in following each impulse of the heart?"

“ In the pursuit of beauty, yes ; love is a passion not to be judged by common rules. Fools only would subject it to vulgar tests. Your highness’s worst enemies don’t accuse you of being one !”

“ Me ! nay, why fix on me a general remark, as though I were its only application ?”

“ In questions of feeling we should never talk abstractedly—they are all personal. And who might be a better application for whatever appertains to love, than he who is avowedly the most successful man of his day ?”

“ Has been, count, has been happy, from time to time—but those hours are past,” said the elector, with a subdued smile ; the recollection of by-gone joys checking the flush of pride raised by the Italian’s insidious flattery.

“ As good days are in the calendar now as the very best of former enjoyment. As bright eyes are beaming in this very town as ever shone. As witching charms are within your reach as ever were in elf-land. Life is still young.

Your highness said erewhile, that wine could make it perennial. What then may not be done by love and beauty?"

"These are wild words, count, but there is a witchery in them. The very name of love, the very look of beauty is a spell!"

"Does your highness feel the last enchantment still?"

"What meaning is there in that question?" asked Ghebhard; struck by the significant emphasis with which Scotus spoke.

"Is not the look of beauty forgotten in this revelry?"

"By my faith and honour, no! The last bright beam of loveliness sent into my breast seems to rule there like the star of destiny."

"Perhaps it *is* such. But many a wandering light has illumined by turns that sensitive and capacious heart, if common report speaks truly."

"In that it tells no lie, Count Scotus. I have often felt beauty's influence—always yield-

ed to it—never forgotten it. The flame it lights in my breast is undying."

"But not consuming, if I may venture to judge by your highness's temperament."

"In God's truth, no!" said the elector with vivacity, "nourishing rather—keeping the fount of feeling alive and warm in its very source."

"And each new spring bubbling up through the old one?" interrupted Scotus, with a tone at once fawning and inquisitorial.

"Even so, count, you know the human heart, and mine, it seems; so I need not confess the power that loveliness wields over me. Neither will I admit the inconstancy implied in your reproach. I have loved often, but always sincerely; and truth is not to be effaced by new impressions."

"Your highness would impugn the doctrine that man can love but once?"

"I repudiate and scorn it, for I know its falsity. There may be men who have loved but once, but then it is only wonderful that

they have ever loved at all. He is an unhappy being, who has met in life but one woman worth loving ; and more so still, who meeting others, finds the effects of his first passion a check rather than an encouragement to new ones. No, count, this dogma of the insensible is a cheat. The true distinction is this :—He who has once loved truly can never again love lightly. The charm of the real passion guards him against the spurious phantasies which imposed on him before.”

“ But in wedded life, when congenial hearts are joined, can either find room for new impressions ?”

“ Alas ! count, there you strike a chord that can find no echo in my experience, however its melody may vibrate in my heart. Wedded life ! What an unattainable heaven have you opened to my envious gaze !”

“ Nothing is beyond the reach of the elastic mind, that is not warped by prejudice and will not shrink at sacrifices.”

“ Tell me, count,” resumed the elector, a though he did not heed the last observation, “ tell me truly, does your skill in star-learning lead you to believe that two minds, born at different periods but in the same planetary conjunctions, may hold occult communion or sympathy, without personal acquaintanceship existing ?”

“ Your highness puts a home and a hard question ; for nought in the whole system of celestial influences has so much puzzled the star-seers of these and other times. For my own part—and with a genuine doubt of my own authority—I can only say, that on that particular head the great master of astrology, Geber, your highness’s near namesake, and myself always agreed together.”

The elector thrilled involuntarily. He knew that the great astrologist just named in such familiar companionship was dead full eight centuries. He smiled as he recovered himself. The Italian did not seem to observe him, but continued.

" To come to a just conclusion on so intricate a point, it must be first decided whether stars be causes or signs—whether they incline without compelling, or rule and regulate sympathies as well as constitutions. Did I wish to make a parade of learning, I might quote the authority of Albubater, Origan, and Pontanus, in the affirmative of your query. Panzonius, Pellantius, and others, in the negative. But so many nice distinctions rise that it would be only a maze of confusion to attempt a disentanglement, until I were possessed of your highness's horoscope, and the fair lady's as well."

" Nay, count, by Jupiter and Venus in conjunction ! you've left this earth and flown to other planets. I spoke not of myself, nor of a lady."

" Your highness's thoughts were in my mind, rather than your words in mine ear."

" If you can read the stars it is not strange that you might read my thoughts, for they

too were fixed in Heaven, or at least in one of Heaven's masterpieces."

"She is most lovely," said Scotus.

"She! who, Count Scotus?"

"She whom your highness thought of."

"Nay, this is but trifling, count."

"The thought of woman is always such, to him who durst not, or cannot marry."

"A priest neither can nor dare."

"Martin Luther was a priest, and did both."

"He had not a princedom and an archbishopric to lose, count," said the elector, smiling, and glad that the conversation took a turn less personal to himself, or rather to the object which had so occupied his mind.

"He had happiness and immortality to gain," answered the Italian, with a serious and almost solemn tone—he could assume *any*.

"He paid, perhaps, too dear a price for either," replied Gebhard Truchses, in an accent of deep sincerity—which he could not feign.

"There are two kinds of worldly immorta-

lity," resumed Scotus, "the one, gained by the sublime labours of science, is conducive to happiness or linked with misery according to the construction of the minds of its few possessors. They only may presume to weigh the value of the price they pay for it—they alone can judge, or feel its amount." At these words the Italian's eyes became fixed, his brow was knit, his lips were firmly compressed, and he seemed involuntarily to clench his hands. The elector could not resist a creeping sensation of doubt and awe. Ulrick Von Leckenstein, listened and looked with breathless interest. Nuenar was a stern and silent observer. Baron Conrad was loudly arguing with Von Heyen, and one or two others. The toad-eater was fast asleep.

Scotus in a few moments recovered from his apparent deep abstraction, and continued in a calm tone—

"There is another immortality, such as Luther has purchased, that is itself happiness to those who live for fame, and happiness being

the great and true object of life, whatever procures it can scarce be said to be above its value."

"The question we discussed, good count, was Martin Luther's marriage," said the elector, "the greatness of this light of true religion I am ready to admit. Also the weight of his example in most things. But even the boldest man will shrink from sacrilege—and it is well known that Luther struggled long with his passion for Katharine Bore, ere he stole her from her convent and made her his wife. Remember, count, she was a nun, and vowed to Christ."

"Would Luther have struggled or hesitated, had she been a simple canoness, and only wore Christianity's symbol round her neck?"

These words were murmured by the Italian, in a close whisper, which none but the elector could hear.

The effect they produced on the latter was everything the speaker—or rather the whisperer—could have wished. The elector absolutely started for an instant from his seat. Surprise

is not the word to express what he felt. It was a combination of shame, wonder, and self-anger, that at once rushed upon him. He felt himself doubly degraded in having betrayed his own feeling—or his fancy rather, for it had not gained the solidity of feeling—and in having in a manner compromised the name of a high-born and innocent female, with whom he had never exchanged a word, and whom he had never seen but once. There was something terribly poignant in this first shock ; for the keenest point in all Ghebhard Truchses' high notion of honour was that connected with the sacred delicacy, due to every woman whom he loved, admired, or aspired to win.

But this first effect as instantly subsided under a sense of perfect self-acquittal, which, as we shall show, was almost as painful as the self-formed accusal. The elector's mind ran back in a moment's summary, over all that had passed within it, or that he had said in connexion with its main thought since he gazed

with such delight that morning on the brilliant face and graceful form of Agnes de Mansfeldt. The determination to know her was as quick as the admiration she excited. Ghebhard Truchses invariably followed up his first impressions. The enthusiasm of his feelings gave him a quickness of perception that less ardent minds may not conceive, much less be caught by; and while his eloquent sincerity was almost always successful in generating a return of feeling, pride, gratitude and honour combined to keep him faithful to affections once so deeply felt, even when others rose up in his heart; as though each full-grown crop of passion had dropped some seeds in the fertile soil, to preserve its memory from the decaying influences of time, absence, and variety. The success consequent on his own persuasive qualities, and the ardour with which he entered into every new pursuit, had given Ghebhard Truchses that half-formed belief in occult sympathies, which the philosophy then in vogue had gone so ab-

surdly far as to attribute to vegetables and minerals, as well as to human beings. It was a floating idea of this nature, connected with his incipient hopes relative to Agnes, that had prompted his recent question to Scotus. But he recollects well that he had not dropped any hint that could bear a possible allusion to her. To Nuenar alone had he spoken of her. Communication between him and the Italian had been since impossible. What then could be the inference in such a mind as our hero's, but that this latter extraordinary person had a positive power of divining his thoughts, perhaps of reading his destiny? Truchses would, and not unwillingly, have conceded its control to a planet or a constellation. But that it was in the keeping of mortal man—or even of a man raised by some supernatural means above the level of mortality—was a suspicion accompanied by intense humiliation.

All that we have here described passed with lightning speed in our hero's brain; and his

presence of mind as quickly recovered its balance. In difficulties purely personal, his generous feelings might lead him at times astray ; but when another—and that other a woman—was concerned, it was rarely, indeed, his discretion was found at fault. He therefore made nor the slightest remark in return to Scotus's significant whisper ; but while its subtle voice seemed to hiss serpent-like in his ear, he kept his countenance and his tongue under command. His first conviction was that he was more or less, if not in the Italian's power at least under his influence. He had no time to sift the question. He took it for granted ; and convinced at the same instant that a nearer union with this agent of destiny, if he were such, could not be avoided, and might even lead to essential good, he immediately decided to draw the connexion as close as possible. He therefore said to his mysterious guest, rising at the same time—a signal which the company acknowledged for a breaking up of the party,

"Count Scotus, you lodge with me to-night, and during your stay in Cologne. Johan Hil-paert is not a fitting host for such a man as you."

Scotus bowed assentingly. The party re-tired to the withdrawing rooms. The elector, Scotus, and Nuenar walking with steady pace, Von Krichlingen and the rest making their way as best ~~they~~ they could. All broke into small groups, or conversed in couples. The elector and Nuenar were joined by Von Krieghlingen, who made some clever efforts to stand straight and listen to what was said by his friends. They only passed a few general remarks on the great business they had in hand ; the honest old baron not being equal to the comprehension of details, even had they been inclined to trust them to him just then.

Scotus approached his table-neighbour young Ulrick, who had watched him whenever he spoke, and followed him still with fascinated gaze.

"Well, Herr Ulrick," said he familiarly,

“ you now go, no doubt, after this sensual repast, to the pure delights of a love-feast with the woman of your heart ?”

Von Leckenstein blushed deeply, and thrilled with astonishment at the wonderful divination which had so fathomed his intentions. He could not reply ; but Scotus saved him the trouble of attempting it.

“ You are a happy and a fortunate man,” resumed the conjuror—“ it is few who have the luck—or the merit—to captivate a duchess at first sight.”

Ulrick’s brain turned with surprise and delight.

“ Follow up the stroke—boldly, vigorously—you shall not want a friend—I promise you success,” said the tempter, squeezing Ulrick’s hand firmly ; and after a little while taking leave of the elector, for the purpose of making arrangements for fixing his residence in the palace.

We need scarcely stop to dwell on the be-

wildering sensations which agitated young Ulrick's mind. It may be better to state that Scotus had been that morning a keen observer of all that passed in the balcony and below it, before the period of his assuming his station in his carriage, and following with his train the line of the procession. Mixing with the crowd, in a cloak that concealed his finery and as occasion required, hid his face from view, he had closely followed and stood by the elector, whom he had resolved to make his victim ; and in pursuance of his system he watched his every movement, like a hawk hovering over ere it pounces on the prey. Other motives fixed his attention on the group in the balcony, which so completely absorbed the elector's observation ; and he had too keen a tact not to distinguish the individual object *it* had chosen. In what passed during the dinner conversation he had trusted somewhat to chance. Had Truchses been indifferent to the allusion so directly hazarded in reference to the canoness, he reckoned

on the power of his jargon and his perseverance for forcing the elector into some fanciful belief, connected with the unknown lady. But in spite of Truchses' reserve the Italian saw he had hit upon the right track for working on his feelings. His other objects in watching the balcony, and his late conversation with Von Leckenstein, will be by and bye explained.

CHAPTER VI.

THE quiet dinner-party at Kriechlingen-house formed a very passive contrast to that at the archiepiscopal palace. While the worthy owner of the mansion was laudably employed, as we have shown, in doing honour to the elector's wine and violence to his own wits, the four fair beings from whom we have been too long separated were partaking of a temperate, but nobly-served, repast, with the invalided wife of the absent baron, and the mother of the sisters who so gracefully did together the duties of hostess.

Baroness Von Kriechlingen had for several years suffered from a malady, which gradually

undermining her health and strength, and rendering her a prisoner in her private apartments, did not, however, deprive her of the domestic solace of her family circle, or the company of such guests as visited from friendship rather than ceremony. She was an amiable, unassuming, and pious, woman, with good sense to bear with those faults in her husband which she could not control, and good feeling to instil into the minds of her children lessons which she had no power to enforce. Her daughters loved her the better, and probably did not obey her the worse, for this. There is a spring of generosity in young minds, which almost always keeps moist and fresh the instinct of duty to an indulgent parent.

The baroness's family party was this day completed by the presence of old Cyriacus Spangenberg, the chaplain of Mansfeldt, under whose care Agnes had made her journey from Thuringia to the banks of the Rhine. Respect for this venerable church-

man threw a certain degree of restraint over the sisters, to whom he had been till the previous day quite a stranger ; and they were not sorry when he retired to his afternoon devotion, which conscience and habit rendered as necessary to his mind as digestion was to his body. It was then the most pleasing duty of the day was called for, on the part of the sisters—the task of reading by turns, or playing on the lute or virginals, to their mother, whose life of monotonous seclusion required such relief. It is true there was little instruction and much less amusement to be found for two lively, not to say giddy, girls, in the controversial writings of those days ; and it was such that Baroness Von Kriechlingen delighted in, and over the leaden pages of which Fredolinda and Emma often, in their own despite, felt their lids to close and their heads to droop. The book chosen for the edification of the present evening, selected by Spangenberg in honour of his celebrated friend Melanchthon, was a translation in heavy German

of his famous defence of the tenets of Luther against the attacks of the Paris doctors, entitled in the original, “*Adversus furiorum Parisiensium Logastrorum decretum.*”

The very title of the tract, announced by the baroness as she pulled it from under the cushion of her easy chair, was enough to appal any less devoted individuals than those who so cheerfully set themselves to the task of wading through this mass of controversy. The Duchess of Saxe-Coburg and Agnes de Mansfeldt had no such responsibility ; and they willingly acted on the baroness’s suggestion that they should seek together the refreshment of the garden air, and the wholesome exercise of a promenade, on its massive terrace or in its broad alleys.

The friends were soon abroad ; and they were not long in turning to account the wished-for opportunity for undisturbed communion.

“ Thank Heaven, thank Heaven, I am free at last !” exclaimed the duchess, as she reached the centre walk of the garden ; and, concealed

from all observation by a high cypress hedge, she threw her arms round Agnes's neck, and burst into tears.

"Oh, Agnes!" said she, as she conquered her interrupting sobs and recalled her scattered ideas, "this relief is like heaven itself! But for this I should have died outright! My best, my dearest friend, I am—even in your arms—the most wretched being that breathes."

Agnes attempted no common-place consolation; because she felt her friend's distress. Deep sorrow is often garrulous; true sympathy never. Anne understood this.

"How good you are to me," continued she. "How considerate, in not speaking to me. That silent embrace is worth a thousand words. It is the true heart-eloquence. Oh, Agnes, that I could be as when last we parted! That I could blot two years from my life's history! or that life itself were blotted out! — Why should I live?"

"Tell me rather, dearest Anne, what has

so embittered life? Speak freely and fully to me. Confidence in me will do more than any random condolence I could offer, for I am ignorant of the immediate cause of this suffering."

"Oh, that I might tell you all!"

"Confide to me what you like, no more; what you can or ought to tell—what may relieve your mind in the mere telling, or lead to its relief through any means of mine. There is nothing within the scope of my ability that I will not do for you."

Agnes felt an instant inclination to include the word duty in this pledge. But she checked it as soon as the idea rose up. She was not one of those who damp an offer of assistance with reservations. She would freely have risked her life at the moment for her friend's sake; she felt that she would be at any time ready to sacrifice it to her sense of duty. Therefore she was not wont to boast, even negatively, of the latter; and she never willingly uttered anything that might bear the colour of self-applause.

" You know not how criminal I am—nor do I know how you could serve me," said the duchess.

Agnes was startled. The notion of guilt in connexion with her friend had not crossed her mind. This self-accusal at once astonished and shocked her. She said nothing ; but her expressive countenance spoke for her—or in spite of her.

" Yes, it is too true," resumed Duchess Anne, " but you must hear me before you condemn me quite. Indeed I know that it is not in your nature, nor in that of our friendship, that you should do otherwise. I will speak candidly to you, in as far as I *can* do so. My conscience seems already lightened of half its load—but not my heart of any of its suffering. Dearest Agnes, *that* is breaking!"

A renewed burst of tears choked further utterance for awhile.

" Speak, speak, my sweet friend," said Agnes—" I listen with my very soul."

They had by this time gained the bottom of the large and dismal garden, the grotesque solemnity of which added a deeper shade to the sufferer's air of woe.

"Let us walk on the terrace, Agnes," said she. "The look of the Rhine will soothe, though even its placid grandeur cannot solace me. But I must not wear you out with my complaints—and alas! I have none to blame but myself."

As the duchess gazed far over the houses of the lower part of the town towards the river, and marked it flowing on in full and rapid course, it seemed to impart insensibly that feeling of calm which all who have so marked it will understand, and which she had anticipated.

"Now I am much better—more equal to the detail of my shame," she resumed. "Our last night's conversation, dear Agnes, told you much of my causes of wretchedness. I had hoped to command myself sufficiently to conceal the rest. But a circumstance to-day forces

me to a further exposure of my griefs—forces me, Agnes, for it is not in mere selfishness that I inflict my sorrows on you. I need support—you, my friend are, happily for yourself and me—.”

“ Dearest Anne, you lose time—we may be broken in upon,” said Agnes, with an affectionate tone, glad to interrupt the utterance of a compliment to herself.

“ Well then, to be brief—I have told you, Agnes, of my husband’s estrangement from me, his neglect, his abandonment, almost from the very first months of our marriage. There was enough in the endurance of all this for sorrow, but nothing for self-reproach. Nor have I, you will allow, laid my complaints too heavily on the duke. I have admitted his good qualities, his frankness, his courage, his indulgence, the amiability and gracefulness, which so soon won my heart, as well as the levity which threw it aside almost as soon as won. I have dwelt on all this before.”

“ Then why, dear Anne, repeat it now? it is acutely painful to me, and you have avowed it not to be to the purpose of what you would communicate.”

“ Bear with me, Agnes; as a woman you can do so.”

“ Did you, my friend, always bear with the duke, as a wife?”

“ As Heaven is my witness, yes! I never reproached him, but with my silent tears. I could—aye, and can even now, feign smiles for those I am indifferent to—but never for him I loved.”

A sigh—for her friend’s sake—was Agnes’s only answer to the avowal, which, as she thought, explained much of the unhappiness which marriage had inflicted on the Duke and Duchess of Saxe-Coburg. Our heroine knew, from an instinct of good sense, what many cannot learn even from experience, that there is a virtuous hypocrisy founded on generous forbearance,

which forms one of the cardinal blessings of wedded life.

"Well, Agnes," continued the duchess, "for nearly two years this state of things went on. I began at length to lie down, as it were, under the burden of my misery. I ceased even to weep or sigh. I was sinking into utter apathy, when a new turn, the worst of all, was given to the deep current of my fate. You know that the duke, with all his light and, I may be allowed to say, frivolous traits of character, has a passionate love for the romantic mysteries of science; often have I known him to pass nights of watching with some alchymist, over the poisonous fumes of crucibles and alembics; or in cold and rain on the topmost tower of the castle, staring with astrologers to catch a glimpse of some new star through the impervious clouds. Like everything he undertakes, those fancies are pushed to excess, and abandoned ere time is given for a result. You may judge of the numbers of persons attracted to

Coburg by those notorious pursuits of the duke. You may have heard of the profuseness of a patronage which is too often misplaced. The castle is for ever swarming with strange figures and wild faces. The costumes of almost all parts of the known world are to be seen in our courts, and every professor of science or pretender to it finds a ready welcome there."

"And might not all this, however irksome, still be borne with?" asked Agnes, with a slight accent of reproach.

"All this? alas! Agnes, this is not the point of grievance, I make no complaint of it. Do not mistake, but listen to me. About three months back my husband introduced to me a stranger, an Italian, one of the numerous train I have just mentioned, a professor of most arts—and oh, Agnes, what a master of all! I cannot now, even if I would, enter into minute particulars of this man's powers. He is a miracle of talent and knowledge, scarce had I seen him ere I felt his influence—I had not known him a

week when he seemed the very lord of my destiny. He wholly captivated my mind—but fear nought else—he never touched my heart."

"Thank heaven for that at least! I dreaded more than you have avowed," said Agnes, again embracing her friend.

"I saw that you did, by your looks. No, no, Agnes, I am degraded by my subjection to this man, but not in the common sense dishonoured."

"I should like to know him," said Agnes, a hope flashing across her mind that she might be able in some way to serve the duchess, as a mediator between her and the fate this stranger seemed, as it were, to personify.

"Heaven forefend! one victim is enough," exclaimed the duchess—"though you perhaps would be safe from his influence, for there is something in you, dear Agnes—"

"That will not let me listen to my own praise, and the disparagement of a too partial friend.

Go on, go on ! I can now breathe freely while I listen."

" I have wherewithal to tell will make you tremble for me still. You will believe me, Agnes, that to regain my husband's wandering affections has been my great, almost my sole object from the first days of his estrangement. He of whom we speak soon read my mind, and on that weak point gained quick mastery over it. He made no circuitous approaches to my confidence. But at once convinced me of his power, by proving his knowledge of my most secret thoughts. In short he persuaded me that he could remove all obstacles to my happiness, could recover the duke's constancy, and attach him to me for ever. I cannot now enter into a detail of the various means he used for the attainment of this end. The spells, the charms, the philtres that we worked together, and administered to my husband"—

" With what success ?" asked Agnes.

" Alas ! I know not how to answer that ques-

tion," replied the duchess, with a sigh, " and I was just about to anticipate it by an account of the changing effects produced by those many remedies. Marvellous indeed have they been ! at times all powerful for their object—again total failures, now bringing my wayward lord back to my long-forsaken embraces, with penitence and love ; and then banishing him from me, in a more distant abandonment than ever. So did those witcheries work for several months."

" And did the doubt never strike you Anne," interrupted Agnes, " that the effects which you attributed to magic might have been produced by the magician, for his own purposes, by arts of natural reason rather than enchantment ? might not his influence with the duke have acted as a counter-current to his power over you ?"

" Thousands of wild doubts have flitted across me, Agnes, like the spirits which a conjuror might call up. I have been lost in a maze

of wonderment and fear ; I only know one thing certain—I am wretched !”

“ Dearest Anne, you exaggerate, if not your feelings at least their provocation. Your sensitiveness invests the phantoms of imagination with solid forms. There is nought in all you have revealed which can cast a shadow of reproach, save the facility with which you embarked your chances of recovered happiness on the venture of an impostor’s professions.”

“ Hush, hush, Agnes ! how loud you speak, and how imprudently ! you little know the power of him whose anger you thus risk,” said the duchess, casting round an anxious glance, which almost caused Agnes to smile while she was half disposed to weep.

“ And has this man’s influence over you never been turned to a more directly personal aim ?” asked she, sure that her frightened friend had told her but little of her embarrassments.

A deep sigh was the answer ; and after a short pause the duchess resumed,

"I warned you, Agnes, that I durst not tell you all. I am bound by pledges that I shudder at the mere thought of breaking."

"Then pause in your recital—or quit the subject, dearest Anne—I have no curiosity, beyond the hope of giving you relief."

"Yet I cannot keep wholly silent—no, I must go on. He *has* talked to me, Agnes, has tempted me—but in language so vague, so mystical, that my senses ever seemed bewildered, even when my reason was unconvinced and my heart untouched. I know not what he aimed at most. He always appeared to have several objects at once—in one alas, he succeeded but too completely."

"And that one?"

"Must not—dare not be revealed!"

"Would that I might but see this man who has so bewitched you, my friend!"

"You have seen him, Agnes."

"I have! where? when?"

"Oh, ask me not—I fear I have gone too

far in saying even what I have said. More I must not reveal—at least for the present. I shall perhaps gain more confidence, more strength, by and bye. Your friendship is an unspeakable support. With it to aid me, I shall by degrees grow able to resist the doom that seems to press me down. You are my guardian angel!"

With these words the duchess again clasped Agnes in her arms; while the latter almost afraid of the responsibility thus forced upon her, yet unwilling to check the growing confidence which might best enable her friend to cope with the unholy power that oppressed her—could only silently return the embrace that was accompanied by the most endearing epithets.

Agnes began however to apprehend that any effective confidence, which might acquaint her with the more particular causes of her friend's anxiety, was distant, if not altogether doubtful; so evidently had the dread of this mysterious oppressor gained possession of her mind.

But the duchess, as if suddenly bursting from her thralldom, abruptly exclaimed,

“ No—I will bear the tyranny no longer. He *cannot* know what passes here, though he has persuaded me of his supernatural power. I will speak freely, Agnes—I dread him not !”

This was said in a high and fearless tone, but which, as she continued, was insensibly changed to the murmured cadence of returning alarm.

“ Know then, that I have bound myself to his service by fearful pledges, to do his bidding in all things, as the price of the recovered happiness which he has so solemnly insured to me—to keep secret his words, his wishes, his deeds, be they what they may—but there is one circumstance of criminal and treacherous duplicity which I have acted in, and which weighs me down with remorse—one which I have sworn to conceal, by oaths the recollection of which makes me thrill. Tell me, Agnes, am I bound by an unholy pledge, taken in

terror and repented of in tears of my heart's blood?"

"No—certainly not!" answered Agnes, unhesitatingly. She saw it was no time to trifle with her friend's unhappiness, or to risk the fluctuation of her feelings. "No, Anne, there is absolution in our consciences for even those monstrous engagements. Is it not then a duty to break from all that binds us to them?"

"It is, it is, my best friend; my heart acknowledges the reasoning, it is the voice of virtue's self that speaks—now then at once to unburthen my full heart! you know, Agnes, how it is that I am here now—I, a princess, with royal blood in my veins, and with right to a reigning coronet on my brow—yet without even the slightest ornament of my rank, ring, carcanet, ear-drop, or neck-string, unjeweled and unadorned as the poorest burgher's wife that toils for daily bread?"

Agnes bowed assent. She had heard the common talk, which told of the mysterious disap-

pearance of the Duchess of Saxe-Coburg's splendid jewels, some weeks before, and much of the coarse scandal which disfigured the report. Delicacy towards her friend prevented any allusion to the painful circumstance in previous conversations, and even now did not allow her to speak of it.

“Yes! you too have heard the tale, but it is for me to unravel the mystery. Know then,”—

At this instant the two sisters appeared on the terrace, coming from the house; and they rapidly advanced to the friends, who could but ill brook the interruption of a colloquy in which both were so much interested. But they could find no excuse for declining the well-meant yet worrying attentions of their young and lively hostesses, who continued to bear them company, until the light showers of an April afternoon drove them to the shelter of the mansion; and then the decorous necessities of good breeding claimed a renewal of their visit to the baroness

in her private apartments, into which Spangen-berg had preceded them.

The sun had withdrawn from the busy scene it had so brilliantly lighted, and the buildings of the town and the waters of the Rhine grew dark in the hues of the eventide, ere the friends found an opportunity to attempt a renewal of their broken conversation. This was at length occasioned by the periodical return of the drowsy fit which at sunset invariably visited the invalid, to recompense her for the nights of almost sleepless suffering she had endured so long and so patiently. Old Cyriacus, too, accustomed for nearly three parts of a century to those vigils which wore deep into the night, and to that early rising which added precious hours to the too fleeting day, could rarely resist the propensity to slumber which commonly steals on the studious, the infirm, or the idle at moth-time. The pious, but nevertheless, somnolent discourse which he had so fluently holden during full two hours, on the intricate subjects

of election and grace—the then leading topics of controversy—had almost overcome the sisters as well as their mother. It required a strong excitement to bear up against the “poppy and mandragora” qualities of the good chaplain’s conversation. Such was however actively alive in the bosoms of the impatient friends, particularly in that of Duchess Anne, who could scarcely restrain the gnawing irritability that urged her to break away, long before the baroness’s head nodded listlessly on her breast, or Freda’s and Emma’s eyes began to wink.

“Now, dearest Agnes, we may escape,” whispered the duchess, when unequivocal sights and sounds pronounced the reign of Morpheus to have set in; and uttering a few words of apology in the same cautious tone to Freda, she was quietly leaving the apartment, followed by Agnes, who willingly obeyed her signal, when a loud voice on the stairs and the abrupt opening of the door of the anti-room arrested

the friends, and awoke all the others of the party.

“No, Ulrick, no—a thousand times no!” exclaimed Baron Conrad, in his highest tone, for it was he who now came boisterously on, soured with the Rhenish grape, and disputing, as it were, with his still most submissive nephew every inch of the ground from the elector’s palace to his wife’s saloon.

“I differ with you, Ulrick—I say you are wrong, boy; and by Heavens I will not be contradicted!”

“Nay, uncle, I did not presume to contradict—”

“Not in words I allow—but you did in thoughts. Don’t deny it boy—that’s making it worse—don’t deny it, Ulrick, I say!”

“I deny nothing—admit nothing—assert nothing, good uncle.”

“That’s just what I hate mortally, for I have nothing to argue against. I hate that cunning, hypocritical silence—why don’t you speak

out like a man? why don't you give me the lie? why, the fiend, don't"—

"My good uncle, remember that your foot is on the threshold of a sick lady's room; and that the pious chaplain of Mansfeldt is within ear-shot, and the duchess—"

"Prating popinjay! a sick lady's room!" said the baron, with a mimicking tone, and stopping short at the door. "Is it thus you speak to me of my own wife, my own flesh and my own bone? I have a good mind to knock you down by way of comment on your puppyism."

"Nay, uncle, you know I am your flesh and blood too," replied Ulrick, smiling, and looking with an insinuating air on his intractable kinsman.

"You are, you dog, I know it, I know it—for you look this moment the very image of your poor mother!" exclaimed the old man, catching him round the neck with one arm, and leaning at the same time against the door for support, and hugging him, with such a pressure

as a tender-hearted bear might give to its unlicked offspring.

This somewhat sentimental attitude and situation was disturbed by the door bursting open, and the baron with his fast-imprisoned nephew staggering together in the room. The good old lady, effectually aroused and fearfully startled, sprang from her easy chair with a tremulous scream. Old Spangenberg, less nervous, opened his eyes wide, stared round, and turned them up to heaven, with an instinct of devotion aroused in all cases of alarm. Duchess Anne and Agnes de Mansfeldt stepped back out of the line of operations; while the sisters darted towards it, one catching her father in her arms—the other placing a timid yet affectionate hand in that of her cousin.

The baron was instantly called to a sense of his indecorum, and to almost temporary sobriety, by a sudden stoppage of that mental mechanism which wine sets in motion and good feeling not uncommonly arrests. He stopped short;

and putting one hand to his forehead to assist in quieting the whirligig motion of his brain, and still grasping his nephew with the other, he exclaimed,

“ Hold, hold ! stand fast, Ulrick ! death of the martyrs ! this is too bad. We are wrong, boy—very wrong both of us. Stand fast I say !”

“ I am standing fast, uncle, transfixed with shame to come thus into such a presence.”

“ Then, by St. Paul, if thou art standing steady the house is still running a mad rig ! so ! so ! all is better now—the ceiling is square again, and the walls have ceased their merry-go-round—and the furniture has recovered its legs. Grant me grace, ladies all ! I see my uncourteous intrusion in its true light—I did not expect such a company in this chamber—I forgot my guests and myself. Forgive me ladies —forgive me, venerable sir, my good wife pardons me, I know, ere I ask her—too quickly —too quickly—it is always so. Have I done

thee mischief, my kind help-mate? have I shook thy gentle nerves?"

With these words the baron passed by the princess and the pastor as well as his daughters, and Agnes, whom he considered as a member of the family, his warm heart pointing out the invalided partner of his life as the first object that called for atonement. She soon reassured him; and he then approached Duchess Anne, next the venerable divine, and lastly Agnes, addressing to each hasty and sincere apologies. He finally called his daughters to come and kiss him, "and stifle," as he said, "the rising reproaches of conscience for his breach of manners, together with the memory of that last bottle of the elector's Stein-wine, which was too potent for any head less hard than the rocky soil it grew on."

In the mean time young Leckenstein had made his peace with Freda for his breach of engagement; an easy task, when her wonted willingness to excuse any error of his was strength-

ened by his declaration that he stayed away only from the necessity of caring after her father. He said nothing of Scotus or his honied insinuations. Yet he thought much of them ; and he was soon at the duchess's side, propelled by he knew not what occult influence. It was vanity, whose strongly flowing tide was carrying poor Ulrick with it among shoals and quick-sands, to escape from which he had no pilot.

“ But I shall make no further excuses,” said the baron, “ I will rather pull up by future attentions for past negligence. We will have supper soon ; and in the meantime, girls, let the tapers be lighted in the saloon, and amuse her highness and our kinswoman of Mansfeldt with a party of primero or shovel-board ; or bring forth the ghittersns and be musical ; or dabble in your ‘broidery-looms ; or string your fancy beads ; or cut out your fillagree,”—

“ Good, kind father ! where is your conscience now, that was so troublesome erewhile ? ” said Emma, embracing him and cutting short

his list of time-killing expedients. "Come, dear Duchess Anne, come Agnes, let me be your leader into some of those choice ways of pleasantness. Freda and Ulrick will find a path of their own."

"Aye, that's right Emma, thou art well disposed to do the honours I see. That's right, that's right; keep close to your lovely guests, my girl—never leave them a minute to themselves —don't let conversation flag, or merry-making be worn-out. Make them laugh, and sing, and sport away the time. That's the true way to show hospitality and dispense happiness. Day of my life! we must all be gay to night. Could you not, my love, for this once bear to be wheeled into the Trojan-tapestried saloon? well, well!" continued the baron, as his suffering wife shook a dissentient head at the proposal, "well, we must not press you into the jolly service. But his reverence here will join us at supper, and at our after-revelry too I hope, and give a blessing to the gaiety which

I am resolved shall stir deftly through the whole house to-night?"

To this interrogative assertion the old pastor replied, with a benevolent smile,

"Much thanks, good baron, are due for your honourable entertainment; but you must not forget that old age and long habit cannot be safely tampered with. I never eat a night-meal; and I retire to study whenever the signal-bells of papistry ring out their summons to the vesper mummery."

"Never eat supper! Fast and pray! By St. George, pastor!—I swear by St. George for chivalry sake, not from papist reverence!—By St. George! this is a bad custom, and savours more of the beast and the scarlet woman, methinks, than matins or vespers, nones or complin. Commend me to the man who prays on a full stomach. The mind is never at ease else—and devotion suits ill with a parched palate or a craving maw. Come, come, pastor, bear with us to-night—it's only once in a way."

" 'Tis well for you, baron, to do these things. You are still young ; but eighty and two brook them not," said Spangenberg, mildly yet firmly.

" Why, to be sure, I do count a good score years under that. But a quarter of a century more or less is a trifle in the age of a man. I saw one drink to-day bumper on bumper, bottle after bottle, and make nought of it ; yet he would reckon you to be but a boy in years, and me almost a sucking babe."

" He must be a prodigy. I would say a miracle, had not the display of those mighty dispensations ceased upon earth, and only existed now in the impure, superstitious, and vile cozenry of Rome. Three score years and ten is the natural limit of man's life. He who surpasses it has need of great thanksgiving to the Lord, and he who approaches it would do well to cast off the worn-out mantle of worldly vanities, and turn from ways of deboshed indulgence into the paths of godliness and grace.

Who is the sage, good baron, of whom you speak?"

This question was an inexpressible relief to Baron Conrad, who had winced acutely under the words which preceded.

"Who is he?" said the baron, with a glowing front and confused utterance, "that I believe, pastor, to be a hard question to answer, but he calls himself Count Scotus; and you may well call him a prodigy, in acquirements, at any rate, even if you doubt his age."

"An eminent name," said Spangenberg, "eminent for both good and evil bearers thereof. I have not heard of it as belonging to one noted in this present generation, nay, nor for many ages back. In remote times it was borne by more than one of mark."

"In remote times!" repeated the baron, with a quick accent of curiosity. "How far back? and by whom, good pastor?"

"Why, first there was a pious monk from Ireland, named Marianus Scotus, a bright

ornament—for days of darkness—of the Abbey of Fulda, in the eleventh century, a learned chronicler, and a near relation of the venerable Bede."

"No, it cannot be him—he must come of a less pious family," muttered Baron Conrad; while Ulrick trod on his foot by way of cautious remembrance, and a check on his garrulity."

"Next, there was John Scotus, otherwise Duns, an English Franciscan, and a profound doctor of theology, who died in this very city of Cologne about the year 1300, under circumstances terrible to be told."

"Are you sure he was an Englishman, and that he died, respected sir?" asked the baron, with a tone of doubt.

"We have good authority for his birth having taken place in the town of Dunstable, in Britain, and as it occurred full three centuries back, we need not stretch our faith to be certain he is dead," replied Spangenberg with

a smile, which the twilight did not allow his host to notice.

“Humph!” said the baron, or the incredulous and half-uttered interjection which that orthography is admitted to represent.

“And Paulus Jovius, with other credible historians, tells us that being struck with apoplexy, which was taken for the blow of death, this learned divine awoke in his coffin, and after having gnawed the flesh from his hands in agony, he dashed his brains out in despair against the stone walls of his tomb.”

“I don’t believe it!” vehemently cried the baron.

“It has been doubted,” said Spangenberg calmly.

“Doubted! doubted! and well it may be, for it’s a bare-faced lie, with your good favour. Ha, ha, ha,” exclaimed the baron, laughing outright, “he might have been buried alive, perhaps, but he rose again, as sure as Lazarus —aye, and he walks the earth to this very hour

—to this very hour, my good pastor—at least I think it must be him.—Don't you, Ulrick ?”

‘ Alas, alas ! that the flesh-pots and wine-cups should for ever overload the stomachs and send up their vapour to the brains of the children of men ! Verily, verily, the debaucheries of old, the seething sins of paganism are revived among us ! The world is rife with drunkenness, and rational beings reduce themselves to the base level of field beasts. Oh, wash out, good Lord, this stain from the civilized earth !’

While the pastor involuntarily uttered these words, in under tones of pious solemnity, the baron had time to recover himself, being most uncomfortably warned of his abrupt and profane speech, by sundry thumps in the ribs from his nephew's elbow, the only answer given by the latter to his appeal. None of the ladies felt quite at their ease ; but they remained silent, as the baron exclaimed,

“ You do me wrong, worthy pastor, you do

me wrong. I have taken a cheerful glass to-day it is true, more perhaps than was meet, but it was this Count Scotus—or this Monk Scotus, as I think he will turn out to be—who led me and others too far. He is a wonderful man, in every way, good pastor; a very magician, trust me; a wizard of the first water, as one might say, like the diamond worth a thousand sequins, which he crushed to powder with a hammer to-day, and made whole again, by an impure puff of the Abbot of St. Kenneth's breath."

Cyriacus Spangenberg was no ascetic. He had lived long in the world and had sad experience of excess and extravagance, in the service of the Mansfeldt family, and in the doings of the late count. He knew how to humour a man under the influence of liquor, and he also understood the courtesy due to even a tipsy host in his own house. He therefore replied, in a tone of benevolent bantering,

“ Nay then, baron, with your good leave, I should rather say this Scotus, whom you call a count, was more likely to be that famous conjuror Michael Scott, or Scotus of the north, who was notorious for his knowledge of the black art in the olden time, for his familiar spirit in the shape of a grey cat, and for riding in the air on a broom-stick, or a flying horse, I really forget which.”

“ It is more likely, pastor, it is more likely, as you say,” replied Baron Conrad, with a somewhat subdued tone. “ What more is known of this same Michael? Who waits without? Bring tapers here, I say—this is no fit talk for twilight. Pray pastor, what more of him?”

“ Why, nothing in particular, good mine honourable host. I know nought more, except that he was buried in the same grave with his own clasped book of magic, and that a Greek epigram was written on him by my illustrious

friend George Buchannan of Edinburgh, preceptor to King James, which runs thus”—and here old Cyriacus repeated the well-known lines.

“ It sounds well, pastor ; it savours of merit in the very tingle of the words ; but how may it go in a translation, I prithee ?”

“ Why somewhat as this,

‘ Oh, Scot ! thou art a Scot in Scotland.’

the rest has escaped my memory.”

“ What you recollect is rather against my argument though, good pastor, for the Scotus I speak of is an Italian ; though in regard to the magic, the grey cat, and the broomstick, I think it likely to be the same—Is’nt it, Ulrick ?”

“ And what then may be the age of him you speak of so wildly, if, worthy baron, you will pardon the phrase ?”

“ Why the Abbot of St. Kennett computed it to be about 320, according to the Italian’ own showing.”

“ Loose authority, baron—those rich dignitaries of idolatry reckon nothing rightly but their own odious exactions. Methinks the abbot has counted wrong. Since the days of the patriarchs such tenure of life has not been given to man, though Paracelsus boasts he could make a man live four hundred years, if he might bring him up from his birth, and diet him as he list ; but then, baron, he should abstain from riotous living, surfeiture, and strong wines. But let all that pass ! Your new acquaintance must be an extraordinary person. Whence comes he ?”

“ From the clouds, it may be, or more likely from regions of another direction,” said the baron significantly, pointing downwards ; “ only he could scarce have got either in heaven or hell his gold-covered chariot, and his splendid jewelled ring, the very counterpart, Duchess Anne, of one I saw with your uncle the great Elector Maurice, when myself and George Mansfeldt, Countess Agnes’s father and my right good friend”—

At this instant two servants brought in the lighted tapers ; and, as their reflection fell on the duchess, she looked as motionless and ghastly as though she had died without a struggle, and still sat corpse-like on her chair.

The alarm, the confusion, the cold water and cordials, the exclamations and the prayers—all that is usual on such occasions was not wanting on this. But of all the persons present, Agnes alone had a true notion of the duchess's ailment, and she only therefore could suggest the fitting remedy. She had no doubt that the wonderful personage who had so addled Baron Conrad was identical with him whose tyranny had so subdued her friend. She knew that repose and immediate removal to her apartment, where no obstacle would prevent the free utterance of her feelings, was the only course to be pursued towards her recovery. She therefore, by every possible persuasion, strove to snatch her from the torturing kindness by which she was on all hands assailed. But the baron and

baroness, and their warm-hearted daughters, were not to be shaken off—old Spangenberg alone comprehending and seconding the arguments of Agnes.

At length the duchess began to recover herself sufficiently to act on these suggestions. She rose from her seat; and, taking Agnes's arm, she motioned towards the door, thus expressing her wish to retire. The rest made way; the baron exclaiming,

“ Good, good ! all is right again ! So, so ! 'twas this wild talk about monks and magic, and such wild devilry that frightened our fair and noble guest. So, so, cheer up, dear duchess. Pastor Spangenberg will say a short prayer or two by-and-bye, to purify the house of such evil subjects as we talked of erewhile. A night-lamp shall remain in your sleeping-room. The girls shall relieve each other at your bed-side. My nephew here and myself will watch by turns in your anti-room till cock-crow, and tomorrow all will be well again. For the elector

has honoured me and my poor mansion by inviting himself to supper, with my friend Nuenar and Count Scotus himself, who, be he what he may, has tricks and turns at his fingers' ends, that would raise the sick from the very death-couch, and lay the liveliest ghost that ever"—

Ere the sentence was finished, the duchess, wholly overcome, sank faintly on the floor. She was carried senseless to her bed; and when she came to herself again, she found Agnes and Freda watching over her, and applying various means of recovery. The baron, the old chaplain, and most of the household, were watching at the door. Emma was mixing up, by her mother's direction, and from her private store of drugs, a cordial dose which she pronounced infallible in cases of heart-sickness or nervous affection. But the baron gave his advice for "a possett of good muscadine, with nutmeg, ginger, and other spices, as worth all the prescriptions of the doctors, from Galen down to Simon Hartzbraten, who had dosed and did

little good to the family, for the last two dozen years and more."

Agnes, judging her friend's anxiety for an uninterrupted conference, requested Freda to retire and leave the duchess entirely to her care. She confidently expected that the latter would back this by strenuous and decisive words. What then was her surprise to find her, on the contrary, express the greatest reluctance to be left alone with Agnes, whom she entreated, in terms the most affectionate but most decisive, to leave her to herself, and to the sole care of her waiting gentlewoman? After seeing that she was quite recovered and settled for the night, Agnes consequently retired, wondering not a little at the sudden and apparently capricious change, which, however, she forebore to qualify by any harsher epithet.

CHAPTER VII.

IT was now evident that terror, at the very mention of her oppressor's name and his probable appearance in the same house with her, had frustrated all Duchess Anne's resolution, and totally checked the progress, of her intended revelations to Agnes. As we do not wish to keep our readers in the same state of suspense to which our heroine was thus forced, nor to impress them with any exaggerated notions relative to the secret of the unhappy duchess, we will briefly state the circumstances of her intercourse with Scotus, and the matter which so particularly weighed on her mind.

Enough has been explained, from her own

lips, of the unholy mastery he had obtained over her ; and her character, accounting for the facility of his conquest, may have in some measure betrayed itself already. The Duchess of Saxe-Coburg possessed, with many qualities highly amiable and with a considerable share of talent, that curious but not uncommon failing of sensitive women, which gives them a positive pride in a weakness even greater than is usual to their sex.

The wilful submission to some tyranny as a title to compassion, or the wish for misfortunes merely to have the privilege of proclaiming oneself unhappy, seem inconceivable failings of the female mind. Yet we find them at times exert a powerful influence, preventing some from breaking away from their misery, and prompting others to provoke and exaggerate their distresses.

It would be scarcely fair to rank the Duchess of Saxe-Coburg in a class of beings so pitiable. She was deeply tinged with the mor-

bid vanity which is the base of such weakness. But she had too much pride to admit of its taking possession altogether of her character; and had not the superstition of the age led her to believe firmly in the supernatural power of Scotus, she had never yielded to his despotism.

The machinations by which this practised impostor worked on her may be easily imagined, when her helpless situation and her ardent disposition are recollected. The duke, her husband, volatile and dissipated, was glad to leave her as much as possible to herself, and the society of this new acquaintance, and to escape from the monotony of reproachful tenderness with which she ever received him. But his early affection at times brought him back, as fond and ardent as ever; while his ample reliance on her honour left him at all times secure for his own.

The designs of the Italian adventurer were manifold. But he soon saw that his best chance of success was in regard to those which had

reference to pecuniary gain. He at least resolved to prosecute them first, as most likely to lead to those which he kept in reserve. He calculated that if he could once involve his intended victim in some grand scheme of money embarrassment, he would have her completely in his power for all purposes. He therefore turned all his efforts towards that point. He had previously exhausted the scanty stores of the duke, whose great expenses, in an extravagant establishment and carousings of enormous cost, together with his profuse expenditure for scientific schemes, left him but little to be swindled of. The duchess herself had still less at command ; for a generous disposition kept her always poor as to mere money. But she was rich in the possession of most magnificent jewels. Few princesses of her time, of higher rank even, were so abundantly supplied with those splendid ornaments, to which the extravagance of fashion in those times gave an importance even beyond their intrinsic value. It was

just at this period that Elizabeth of England was issuing sumptuary laws, to restrain a profusion in her nobility which sovereign princes wished to limit to themselves. Those of Germany often exhibited on their persons as much as two or three times the worth of their yearly revenues; hoping by those displays to dazzle the eyes of their subjects, if they could not altogether blind them to the comparative insignificance of their rulers. Anne of Saxony, though the youngest was also the favourite daughter of her parents; and from them as well as her uncle Maurice she had received numerous jewels, besides the presents lavished on her by her husband and his family, on her marriage and afterwards. It was on those accumulated stores that the mercenary eyes of Scotus were fixed, and for the obtaining of which every other as bad, but not as base, design was put in abeyance.

We must not stop whatever interest our tale may possess, by dwelling on anterior circum-

stances, the result of which is already known to our readers. Scotus obtained possession of the jewels; having first completely subdued the mind of their too credulous owner, to the belief in his integrity as well as the conviction of his power. He had succeeded in persuading her that for the furtherance of his project to bring back the wandering affections of her husband, some inestimable and almost unpurchasable accessaries were required, to obtain which a sum of money was wanting quite beyond his command; and she had no fund on which to draw for it. The many attempts already made to effect the purpose she had so much at heart, and with such varied and altogether such imperfect success, had so involved her in the Italian's plans, and so instigated her to persist to the final accomplishment of her hopes, that she could not retreat, even if she would, without incurring his reproaches or exciting his revenge. In the early parts of their intercourse he had insinuated himself completely

into her admiration and good opinion. As it advanced he had entirely succeeded in making himself an object of dread. She looked on him at length as a being of superior power, and capable of any means for its exertion—as a sort of malignant genius, by whose agency a good object may be effected, and whose wickedness would stop at nothing for the attainment of a bad one.

But before she obtained this conviction, the most fatal step of her intercourse with this her evil genius had been taken. Under pretext of examining the jewels and selecting a portion of them, to be placed in the hands of her relative the Margrave of Anspach, as security for a secret loan, Scotus had obtained possession of the whole ; and no sooner had he secured them than he at once threw off the mask, and avowed his intention of making use of some of them for his own purposes, and keeping the rest as a pledge for her secrecy and discretion. In the mean time persisting that he had the power of

bringing back the duke to his allegiance, and promising that he would complete that object, besides securing to her a harvest of some mystical and indescribable happiness, of the nature of which he said she was not yet capable of forming a notion.

A moment's reflection told the unfortunate duchess that she was completely in this wretch's power. During the process of his various spells and incantations, he had from time to time obtained from her sundry personal tokens, such as locks of her hair, trinkets containing amulets and love charms, and some signatures of her name, on scraps of paper to which the expert juggler had appended sentences in resemblance of her writing, and conveying sentiments of most criminal tendency. These he without hesitation assured her he would produce, in confirmation of a direct accusation against her conjugal fidelity, did she dare to reveal the fact of his being the possessor of the jewels; and to conceal his iniquity, he made her con-

sent to a fabricated story of their being stolen. To give a greater appearance of probability to the tale, Scotus took every measure that ingenious villainy could devise ; he made openings in the windows and door-panels of the apartment where the jewels were usually deposited, left foot-prints on the floors and traces in the garden, where forcible entry was supposed to have been effected, taking care to have those of a size different to his own feet ; fixed a ladder against the garden wall, and finally he placed one or two of the empty caskets on the line of probable flight, which the imagined robber might most naturally have taken.

Grievous was the regret with which the unfortunate duchess found herself entangled in such a web of deceit and danger. But compromised and committed as she was, she knew not what to do ; and felt escape to be utterly hopeless. She was buoyed up, also, by the belief that after all she should be made happy by the very machinations which now caused her

such misery. As to the real and right course to be pursued—a full confession to her husband, and an exposure of the wretch who had so worked on her for her own dishonour—she dared not harbour the thought. Dread of the duke's anger, of the Italian's vengeance, of public disgrace, all kept her silent ; and mixed with all there was that infatuated expectation of ultimate good, which had her mind been left in its own beautiful purity, she had known to be incompatible with such base means.

The fabricated details of the robbery were sent abroad and believed. Suspicion never fell on the real culprit, or on his hapless associate. So far it might be supposed all went well. But it was then, in fact, that her anguish of mind began ; for among the many objects on whom calumny endeavoured to fix the stigma of infamy the duke her husband was himself included ! His extravagance and his debts were the pretences on which the daring insinuations were based ; and the original propagator

of this monstrous slander was, as our readers will readily believe, Scotus the Italian. But those who were not in the secret of his infamy in vain endeavoured to trace the author; several persons being, however, most ready to propagate the vile invention.

It was the fate of Anne of Saxony, like almost every other princess who marries out of her own immediate country, to be followed to that of her husband by several household sycophants, who invariably endeavour to breed discontent in the mind of their mistress, magnifying the demerits of her adopted home, decrying whatever is good; and when, as in her case, the wife happens to be of a more elevated family or haughtier lineage than the sovereign she is mated with, instilling on every possible occasion disparaging comparisons between what was her's by the chance of birth and that which she has chosen. Few princesses have the good sense to perceive what a bad compliment is concealed under this flattery; and there was certainly

much in the situation of the Duchess of Saxe-Coburg to excuse her for not forming an exception. But when, emboldened by her facility in permitting such liberties as those, one or two sneaking dependents dared to insinuate their belief in the calumny against her husband's honour, her indignant refutation was proportioned to her knowledge of his innocence. Even had she not had such fatal proof of the latter in her own consciousness, she had as certainly repelled the outrageous supposition. And no answer could be ventured to her solemnly-urged questions—"How could a prince, a knight, a gentleman, stoop to so vile an act?—or how could it be necessary for *him*, who had only to express a want, to hint a wish, and all that was her's on earth, not merely ornamental baubles, but the minutest necessaries of life, had been laid at his feet?"

Even those who believed the monstrous calumny were struck dumb by this reasoning. But it was soon turned into a new subject of

praise to the conscience-stricken utterer, who was lauded still higher than ever for her imputed magnanimous forbearance; while she, who could by one sentence have confessed and established the truth, dared not open her lips. It was then no wonder that she was miserable, nor were her expressions of mental anguish exaggerated. Few things are more distressing to an ingenuous mind than the necessity of submitting to undeserved praise. And when it is at the expense of another's innocence and honour, it must be excruciating.

Unable longer to bear the sight of her husband, of her tyrant, or of the scene of transactions which so sunk her in her own respect, the duchess at last resolved to remove for awhile from Coburg. She availed herself of the opportunity afforded by the Conference of Cologne, to which the idle, the curious, or it might be, as in her own case, the unhappy, were flocking from many parts of Germany, in search of pleasure. Obtaining the ready per-

mission of the duke, she resolved to invite herself, as has been told, for a few weeks' visit to Baron Von Kriechlingen, the old friend of her family, whose daughters had been long known to her as children ; but the facility thus given of meeting again, in uncontrolled intercourse, her beloved and confidential friend Agnes de Mansfeldt, was the chief inducement with the duchess. She wrote her such a letter as could not fail being answered in person. And it was accompanied by the invitation which Duchess Anne had solicited for her friend from the baron's family, and which they, as Agnes's relatives, were delighted to send to her.

But another consent was required before those projects were put in execution ; and it was with the terror of a slave soliciting a boon from his taskmaster that the duchess requested it from Scotus. He readily granted his sanction, for her plan precisely tallied with his own. Having secured the means of appearing at Cologne, in the style which would, as he had

good reason to believe, be the best passport to the notice of the elector, he had a double motive in approving of the duchess taking the same destination. He thus secured her against the chance of any betrayal of their joint secret, to which conscience or accident might lead her were he away; and he was not sorry to have such a fear-fettered instrument as she, to aid in whatever design might spring up during his expedition. And among the half-formed projects in which he indulged were some connected with that incomparable being, whose beauty, virtue, and talent, was the never-ceasing theme of her scarce too partial friend's eulogiums. Thus Scotus knew Agnes before he saw her even ; and the impression he so accurately observed her personal charms to have made on the elector, during the period in which they both saw her for the first time, determined him to obtain her, if possible, as an auxiliary in his schemes on her susceptible admirer.

As soon as Scotus was assured of Duchess Anne's arrangements, he set out from Coburg;

and he found at Hamburg many lapidaries and moneymen—as speculating capitalists were then called—to facilitate the conversion of a portion of his ill-gotten treasure into cash. Purchases of various kinds, horses, carriages, and apparel, were quickly made ; and a retinue hired, proportioned to a rank much more elevated than that assumed by the adventurer, who now dubbed himself count, and took airs that would have been unbecoming in a prince. He had soon insinuated himself into the good graces of the commercial world of Hamburg. Where gain was the chief object of men's lives, he who had wealth was sure of respect, or what passed for such. But is this reproach only due to the Hamburg moneymen of the sixteenth century ? How many puritanical pretenders to-day seek out, associate with, and fawn to, the basest and meanest of mankind, whose means allow them to pander to the appetites of those sordid sycophants who at once feed on and despise them ?

The next move in the great game now played by Scotus, brought him to Cologne. His pro-

gress there has been related. The effect produced on the duchess by the written announcement of his arrival, by her passing view of him in the procession, and the threatened certainty of his appearance in the very house, which was no longer one of refuge from his presence or of relief against her wretchedness, have been also told. And we so conclude this retrospective episode in the drama, of which, after all, these were not alone the chief actors.

While the duchess lay in all the tortures of solitude, and her friends either watched over or lamented her situation, and the domestics of the establishment were running to and fro in various directions, and the whole of Kriechlingen house was in confusion, old Karl Kreutzer sat in the well-stuffed comfort of his large leathern chair, close to the iron stove of his lodge, and in an atmosphere that would have suffocated any less salamandrine personage than a German house-porter.

It has often struck us as a question of cu-

rious speculation—how did the good folks of Germany contrive to kill thought before the introduction of tobacco and the invention of pipes taught men to smother it and smoke-dry their own intellects, after the present fashion? It is a problem now hard to be solved. But we must only hope, for the honour of the olden time, that modern dullness was a parallel importation with that of “the Virginian weed,” and that there was vivacity and vigour, of mind and body both, ere our King James blew his “counterblaste” against that “precious stinke, hateful to the nose, harmful to the brain, hurtful to the lungs, and in the black fumes thereof nearest resembling the horrible Stygian smoke of the pit that is bottomless.”*

Karl Kreutzer was, however, as stupid an individual as one might meet even in the porter’s lodge of a German baron to-day; only alive, but that keenly enough, on the one particular point of his own interest. And while he now

* King James’s works—“A Counterblaste to Tobacco.”

sat ruminating on the events of the last twelve hours, he mentally cast up, as was his wont, the debtor and creditor of his day's account, and strove at last to strike a balance.

“So!” soliloquized he—“so! The day is well nigh over—the evening has set in—and night is fast coming on. Good! and what has this new day done for Karl Kreutzer? I am some fifteen hours older than I was when I rose with the sun. How much the wiser or the richer am I at his down-going? Two golden ducats for vails, besides what I may reckon on from this young duchess for carrying her the letter. Got wot what it was worth! but the messenger who bare it—and she was a wondrous wild one—gave me cause to hold it as a missive of high price, if so be it the happiness of this fair lady was dependent thereon. But what matters that to me? Is it my place to pry into the secrets of the house—masters or visitors, servants or followers? no, no; a wise porter has always an open hand for what comes

in, and a closed eye for what passes out—and easy it is to pass at *his* blind side, who can blink right or left as occasion requires. Is it my concern, forsooth! if the groom of the chambers steals forth at night, and returns with a gentle tap at the window by day-break? am I to ask whence comes it? as he puts a broad silver piece on my palm with his right hand, and places the finger of his left on his closed lips, as much as to say mum! Would that be becoming? Or if a veiled lady enters softly at night, and trips up the back stairs towards the young chaplain's attic, would it be gallant or civil to say aback! when I know she will come stealthily down ere cock-crow, and his reverence by her side, to give her a blessing as she passes the gate, and me a guilder or two as I cautiously draw the bolt behind her? Am I, Karl Kreutzer, a censor of morals to wicked Cologne? alas and alack! I should have a hard task of it. And if the kitchen-boy carries out the

market panniers as heavy as the cook sends them in, is it my place to look under the covers and count fragments—or am I to ask if the flasks be full or empty which the cellar-man takes forth in his broad breeches-pockets—or refuse the cold pastry, or pot of conserves, or the choppine of Rhenish, or bottle of Malvoisie, which my fellow-servants drop in the lodge as they pass by in token of old kindness? Is a porter a thief-catcher, or an informer, or a spy? *Gottbewahre!* If he turn such a meddler and make-mischief my branch of the Christmas tree would run small risk of breaking down!*

What is it to me if the young Baron Ulrick slips into the courtyard and lingers in the garden, after he has taken leave at night and is believed by his uncle and aunt to be safe in his

* Old Karl here alluded to the German custom which still exists—most amiably—of hanging presents of various kinds on branches cut from the tops of young fir-trees, which are lighted up and decorated in a very tasteful fashion, in every house from palace to cottage on Christmas eve.

college at Bonn ; while Frauline Freda, Heaven bless her ! steals out to keep him company, albeit her worthy parents, my good masters, fancy her listening to Pastor Scragglekopft's lecture at the congregation's church hard by ? Would it be meet for me, who winked at the wild doings of her father in his early days, to thwart the innocent pleasures of the daughter now that he is old ? Who goes there ? who draws the postern bolt ? ”

“ It is only I, good Karl, going forth in haste for drugs to the pharmacy in the Kirchgasse for the sick lady above,” said the outgoer, one of the varlets, so despatched by orders of the baroness, for some medicament of which her store was deficient ; and taking advantage of the errand to carry off some of the day’s spoils, for sale at a not distant tavern.

“ And a marvellous slow gate dost thou go at, honest Simon,” said Karl, half aloud. “ He who halts on his road to the doctor hurries on

his way to the fiend, saith the proverb—and methinks that large bundle under thy cloak is a sort of passport for thy safe journey ! But never mind ! It is no matter of mine !

‘ When the thief creepeth,
The watchman sleepeth,’

as the old rhyme has it. And God’s mercy ! let him who is paid for it look to it, as the saying is. No ! never be it told of Karl Kreutzer that he peached against his fellows. Thirty years and more have I sat in this lodge, and never wronged my masters myself, nor meddled with those who did. *Gott in Himmel ! I can sleep with a clear conscience.*”

With these words, Karl betook himself again to his easy chair, which a keener perception of right and wrong might have perhaps made an uneasy one. But he was of that class of men who deceive themselves with as little remorse as they cheat others, or let them be cheated, when their own interest is at stake.

Scarcely had the porter began to doze, when

he was aroused by a gentle tap at the street casement close to the postern, such as he had alluded to erewhile as the return signal of the truant groom of the chambers, as well as others of the household night wanderers.

“Who’s there?” briskly cried Karl, without stirring from his seat or moving limb or muscle; long habit having accustomed him to sleep, as it were, like a hare, with his eyes open, and to call out instinctively at the slightest sound.

“Come hither, kind master Karl?” said a voice at the window.

“Aye, aye, it is ever thus—kind master Karl, good master Karl, honest master Karl, whenever they have anything to ask for. But when otherwise, this honest, good, kind gossip of their’s is only a surly, churlish, dogged old fellow. And were I but to lose my place—what would it be then?”

“Good Karl, it is me—open the gate!”

“And who the fiend are you?” said the old man grumbling as he left his seat and moved

towards the window. “*You* forsooth ! I am expected to know every one, am I ? Here it was only this forenoon that an ill-favoured varlet I never before clapped eyes upon called out that he was my *friend* Caspar Schott—while a ragged-skirted wench, as strange-faced as impudent, would have thrust her squalling child into my lodge for old acquaintance sake ! and another—”

“ Master Karl !” said the voice, and a gentle tap accompanied the call.

“ Well, well, I’m coming a’nt I ? Walk in and tell your business, be ye whom ye may,” exclaimed the testy Cerberus, drawing the cord that raised the spring-latch of the postern, and looking at the same time, like a trusty sentinel, from the one-paned window, to mark if the new comer was one who might or might not pass at his *blind* side. But when he caught a full view of the old woman who had so bribed and so frightened him in the morning, he started back a pace or two, and his knees knocked to-

gether as she stepped into the lodge and closed the door behind her.

“Kind Master Karl, I told you we should meet again,” said she, unceremoniously seating herself (in a very unfeminine posture as Karl thought) on a low stool beside the stove.

“Sit down in your chair,” continued she; and Karl obeyed mechanically, albeit unused to have the honours of his strong-hold done by another.

“And now that you are seated again on your throne like a king, let me look at your palm that I may see what good will betide ye to-night.”

Karl had a particular horror of chiromancy and all sorts of fortune-telling, ever since an old witch had prophesied in his boyhood that he would live a bachelor and die a beggar. The first part of the prophecy he had been ever afraid to belie, and the latter was a subject of perpetual dread and growing avarice. Nothing but his expectation of gain from his con-

nexion with the old woman could have induced him to hold forth his open hand ; and while he did so, he said in a plaintive tone,

“ Good dame, speak no ill of me or my fortune. I hate to hear bad news, all king as you would christen me—aye as much as the monarch of France himself ; and they say King Henry has just put down the Paris almanacs, rather than suffer their predictions to go abroad —and a good example it is for the world. Deal gently with my hand-lines and lineaments, kind mother ! Don’t tell me that I am to be hanged or drowned—I like not to look forward on a violent end ; and howbeit I must die in poverty, let it be at least on a pallet of clean straw. There !”

And with the concluding word he stretched forth his hand, turning aside his head the while, as though he had been holding out his limb for amputation. Nor could the first cut of the surgeon’s knife have caused a more sudden start to a nervous patient than did the

slap on the open palm given to Karl Kreutzer by that of his companion produce in him.

“ There !” exclaimed the operator, echoing the porter’s word, “ hold your fist now firm shut, and good luck will be sure to come to it.”

Karl religiously performed this bidding, though his nerves tingled with pain from fingers’ point to elbow; and he stared without speaking a word, as the old woman went on.

“ Well Karl, you did your business like a good messenger this morning. The drug worked well.”

“ The drug ! *Gottbewahre !* I gave no drug—I deny it—I call the town council and his highness the elector to witness, if she dies by foul means it is none of my doing,” cried the terrified porter, the dread of being even by implication a poisoner overcoming all other fear; and as he spoke he attempted to rise, but he was held fast by a strong grasp, his hand opening in the struggle, and two double ducatoons, with a small billet in the form of

that he had delivered in the morning, falling on the floor.

“ See, see man, what a shower of good things falls from your own hands. What are you scared at? Drug is but a mystical word that means letter in plain speech, so take up your money, and that other gentle missive, and let both go quickly the same road as the last.”

“ Oh, if so all is right—good ! good !” said the porter, ever convinced by the explanation that was accompanied by a fee. “ I am willing, worthy dame, to do the service that is so nobly requited, but I must protest against false alarms. I am easily shaken by the fear of foul play, and the duchess being so fearfully ill——”

“ What do you say ?—ill ?” cried the old woman, grasping the porter’s arm.

“ Aye, by my soul, good dame, and if they speak truly through the mansion, grievously ill. I hope, I hope dame, nought of evil was

conveyed in that silk-bound scented billet—no poisonous perfumes, no unction, that touching the skin takes the life—no"—

"Hush, master porter, hush ! Do you not hear a tap at your street window?"

"Body o' me ! yes. You have a keen ear for a signal tap, good dame, to hear it before Karl Kreutzer!"

While the porter spoke, his companion sprang from her stool with great agility, and hid herself behind a curtain, which hung across the alcove that contained the functionary's bed. In the mean time Karl pulled his string, opened the postern, and gave admittance to a man wrapped in a dark mantle.

"Save you, master porter !" said he, with an unbending air, and at the same time keeping his face closely concealed. "These are busy times ; you have several strangers in the house, have you not ?"

"Many more than I wish for, and some that might be well spared—no offence, sir stranger,"

replied Karl. " And what may it be that brings you to swell the number ? "

" We are alone, good fellow ? " asked the other, in an authoritative tone. Karl, wishing to meet this by his usual self-important style, and at the same time held doubly in check by the stranger's haughty deportment and the fear of his discovering the secrets of the alcove, replied to one question by a few others.

" Do you see any one else here ? Have you ever heard that I was a married man ? Do you suspect me of concealing a listener behind the curtain to catch every stray idler that chooses to come and pump me for news ? "

" No offence, no offence, master porter ; it is only that I wished just to obtain your good offices with regard to one of the lady visitors, who now abide here."

" Why as for that my master, I am never unwilling to do a good turn (as there are those not far off who could testify) when the fair sex is concerned ; howbeit I have ever kept clear of

them on my own score—but there may be a fate in that,” said Karl, softened by the chance of a coming douceur, “and as I always consider——”

“ So ! so ! enough, enough ! wilt thou then undertake to deliver this secretly to——What means thy grinning ? Off hands, fellow !” said the stranger, stepping back, his sentence broken, and his temper, it would seem, somewhat ruffled, by the imperfect winks which Karl dared not bring decidedly to bear on the alcove, and by the downward pluck he gave to the stranger’s mantle, as the latter thought with a design of uncovering his face.

“ Fellow ! off hands ! *potz tausend !* Is it thus a favour is to be required ? Is that language from him who asks to him who is expected to grant ? *Gott in Himmel !* but the world is turning round, and the wrong way, methinks ! Moreover this is no time to send missives to a lady who is sore sick.—Better come to-morrow ; no one may now

approach the Duchess Anne ; better come to-morrow."

Of this speech of the porter, the angry parts were all affected, and the latter prompted by a wish to keep the communication, which he took it for granted was for the duchess, free from the reach of the old woman. He was too stupid to recollect that there was another strange lady in the house.

" Verily, my honest fellow, thou art wroth with little reason, and thy ire o'ermasters thy wit. I meant not any offence—nor is this missive intended for the Duchess of Saxe-Coburg. I would confide it to thee to be delivered to Countess Agnes de Mansfeldt. Wilt thou take charge of it?"

" O ho! The Countess Agnes! oh, that is a very different affair. Aye, marry, that I will, for she seems a kind-hearted lady. She smiled like an angel when I went up to the balcony to-day with the letter for—hem! hem! When I went up to the gallery"—

" Well, well ! all that is unimportant now. Take means to place this in the young countess's hands by noon to-morrow, and you will do me a favour, and yourself no disservice. Let this be the token!"

With these words the stranger slipped a piece of money into the porter's hand, and with a hasty and haughty adieu, he disappeared.

" Good night ! Sleep well !" said Karl as the postern closed ; and ere he could turn round towards the alcove, its secret tenant had nimbly darted from it, and snatched the letter from his hand.

" Hold, dame, hold ! or rather, let me say, let loose your hold—That fair missive"—

" Peace fool, peace !" exclaimed the other, stamping his foot—aye *his*! But our readers have already detected the sex of this mysterious person. And poor Karl Kreutzer could no longer be deceived in it, as he looked gaping on his companion, whose tall figure, springing up suddenly from his former stooping posture,

appeared, in its female drapery, gigantic ; whose voice sounded like the explosion of a falconet; and the grasp of whose hand seemed to have crushed the sinews and muscles of the electrified porter's arm.

The keen eye of the stranger darted in an instant into the folds of the paper, which he held up to the lamp that burned on the table; and he saw its contents with a glance. He then placed it in Karl's hand ; and uttering, in a most impressive tone, an injunction to deliver both missives with the greatest care and speed, he tucked up his attire in the compactest manner, darted through the postern, and disappeared in a twinkling, baffling the rapid movement of old Karl's thrust-out head and the search of his peering eyes.

“ *Herr Jesus!*” muttered the latter, as he withdrew into his den, “ well might Pastor Scragglekopft say in his discourse, 'fore yesterday, that intrigue and mystery would spread their dark mantle over Cologne, and the devil

hold fast the corners during the conference. It is come to pass, it is come to pass! The holy man spoke the words of truth—and now let every one look to his own. Then what can this new secret be, concerning the young countess above? It feels heavier than a mere missive, or a copy of love-lines sent by some crazy poet for a compliment. Let me see, but first let me look at the fee—the *viaticum* as the chaplain laughingly calls his little present to pay the travelling expenses of these adventuring letters. It felt very like a guilder—but that strapping masquerader took the power of touch out of my fingers by his rude grasp. What! a broad doubloon! *Gott in Himmel!* but I thought he was a brave gallant, that proud-spoken cloak-wrapped messenger. Now for a peep into his—who's there again? In the name of all the fiends, who's there? Is there to be no peace for me to-night? Who's there, I say?"

"Open, Karl, open quickly! I'm out of breath with running from the pharmacy—open,

open!" cried the servant outside, knocking loudly on the postern the while.

"Running from the pharmacy! running from the taverners', lying knave!" muttered Karl, as he leisurely pulled the bolt-string, having first placed the two letters in a strong box, for after examination. "Ah, it is you, honest Simon?" continued he, as the varlet entered, "how those lazy apothekes keep folk waiting."

"Aye that they do, Karl—is the duchess no worse for the delay?" asked the breathless man, passing in speed towards the stair-case.

"What know I of duchesses you dog! up, up stairs with your drugs. If she is the worse for tarrying, ten to one she will be little the better for taking. Ah, *Gott in Himmel!* may I be saved from the two great curses of life—fortune-telling and physic! But Heaven preserve this duchess meanwhile—she has, as yet, been no thorn in the side of honest Karl Kreutzer;" and so muttering into the broad

end, as it might be said, of his own trumpet, this gentle note of self-praise and selfishness died away, without even an echo for the ear of the world. How many a more important individual than the old porter is this moment, even while we write, silently breathing out a somewhat similar tribute to the omnipotence of egotism !

Just at the time that old Karl Kreutzer was murmuring this illustration of the universal principle, the Elector-archbishop of Cologne was throwing off a dark cloak, with the aid of Walram his faithful valet, in that private cabinet in which he had held the interview with Count Nuenar.

“ Thou art sure, Walram,” said he, “ that none observed me going out, nor as I entered by the private way ?”

“ Noné, your highness. I watched carefully, and led off one or two stragglers of the household who lingered in the west corridor—none others were in the way of observation.”

“ Right, Walram, thou hast done well—give me a sober suit of black now, I must visit the nuncio to-night. Say not that I have been abroad—thou knowest I do not wish——”

“ To have your highness’s private charities pryed into—I know it well.”

“ Ah ! Walram,” said the elector smiling, “ thou art the best of confidents. Thou wouldst persuade me that thou knowest not my secret doings, and conceal even from thyself what I confide to thee. Thou, at least, will never betray me, Walram ?”

“ Good, your highness, I have nought to betray—I know nothing of your highness that might not be told to the town council, and lauded by Johan Hilpaert, your worst enemy.”

“ Go to, Walram—you flatter *too* well,” continued the elector, as he pursued the operation of the toilette. “ So ! this grave attire is good for to-night ; but for to-morrow’s dinner, Walram, my last new suit of purple and gold,

and all my rings—all my orders—remember, Walram, all."

"Yes, your highness."

"Thou knowest the whole conference feasts with me—and neither proud d'Arscot, nor vain-glorious Terranova must even approach me in splendour!"

To these last words, uttered but half aloud and even that unconsciously, the prudent confident made no reply.

"All shall be ready, your highness. And for supper at Baron Von Kriechlingen's, how will it please your highness to be dressed?"

"How? as at dinner, to be sure,—in my most proud display!"

"Your highness—if I dare remind you of it, said 'twas a private supper-party."

"And so it is, Walram—so private that I would not have my going bruited much abroad. But nevertheless, I would appear at it in a blaze of splendour. Yes! she shall see me as Semele saw Jove, but not be consumed like her!"

“ Your highness ?” said the valet, stepping close to his lord, curiosity overcoming for a moment his previous caution.

“ I spoke not—or if I did ’twas not for thee, good Walram. Has Count Scotus taken possession of his apartment ?”

“ He has, your highness, an hour gone.”

“ I will visit him there,” said the elector, waving his hand as he left the cabinet, and went into a narrow passage leading to the apartment allotted to the Italian’s use, which opened out upon a terrace in the extensive gardens of the palace.

“ He might as well have spoken it outright at once—I shall soon know the secret, be it what it may,” thought Walram, as his lord disappeared. “ But do I not see already that a new amour lifts him up thus above his usual bearing ? And shall I quarrel with that ? no, no, the flood-gates of generosity are ever open when a rich man falls in love—and he who stands close by, as I do in this case,

has only to hold forth his nets to have them filled!"

During this pithy soliloquy, the elector had reached his guest's apartment; and entering, without any form of state approach, he found him sitting in a loose robe, with books and papers spread on a table before him; while his secretary assisted in their arrangement, and a couple of valets were busied in the disposal of various rich articles of dress in the wardrobes around.

After a few complimentary words exchanged between the assiduous host and the well-pleased guest, the secretary and valets having respectfully quitted the room—the elector's eye was caught by an enamelled miniature which lay on the table. He felt the deep blush which suffused his face, as he started in astonishment.

"Does your highness think it like?" said Scotus, carelessly.

"Count," replied the elector, in a tone be-

tween embarrassment and sternness, “ this is a strange coincidence !”

A rapid suspicion darted across his mind. Could the fair being who had so fixed his thoughts have conspired with this Italian to lead him into an intrigue ?

“ Strange ? That your highness should find a friend willing and able to outstrip your wishes ? Take the picture and wear it—a lock of her glossy hair is within the enamelled cover.”

“ Do you know Countess Agnes de Mansfeldt ?” asked the elector, fixing a keen glance on Scotus.

“ As your highness does—I saw her in the balcony to-day, for the first and only time.”

“ Then let me ask—and answer me fairly and frankly, count—how comes it that you have divined my thoughts ? How, that this lovely portrait of a lovelier model lies ready to meet—to fascinate me here ?”

“ How is it, your highness, that the fair

original's thoughts are fixed on you this moment? and that the embroidered heart, pierced with your fond device, is now in her trembling hand?"

"By Heavens this is too much! There is jugglery in this!" exclaimed the elector, starting back still another step.

"Jugglery means falsehood—Do I speak that or truth?" calmly replied the Italian.

"How know you of that foolish present? How have you this divining power? How is it you thus pierce my secret thoughts and untold actions? Tell me, Count Scotus, for I must be resolved."

"Am I a man to be thus catechised and thus suspected? were it not better to make my power of use? This is no common-place amour. Had it been so, a less agency than *mine* might have sufficed."

"Amour! agency! These words are misapplied—I disown the imputation of the one—I require not the other."

" Yet the first is a positive fact—the latter an invincible necessity. Methinks your highness would do well to pause awhile, before you reject clear evidence and predetermined aid."

" Predetermined!"

" Your highness must feel the deep conviction that I am not speaking lightly—and you cannot believe that I am here by mere chance at such a crisis. There is a destiny—"

" I do believe there is—and if I am its sport you may well be its instrument!" said the elector, solemnly; for he felt one of those sudden impulses of conviction of which minds like his are so susceptible. " Hark ye, Count Scotus," continued he, " you have raised a host of feelings, a crowd of thought, that had no previous existence. You have blown into a flame of wondrous intensity, what was but a mere spark of passing sentiment. I know not how this is—I know not rightly my own feelings, your influence, nor *her* power. I am in a maze of perplexed sensation, and spell-drawn

towards a solution of this exciting mystery. Whether it be fate, or my own doing, I know not,—but certes you have discovered or I betrayed the bud of an incipient thought, which ripens fast to full-blown passion. Be it so ! I scorn to shrink from aught that may betide. I will go forward in this path—and judge at least with my own heart's conviction of the secret workings which hurry me along."

" Your highness shall want no guide while I am with you."

" Good, good ! Be it so again ! To-morrow night will tell me more of this. Will you, count, give me this—almost too lovely yet not too flattering effigy ?"

" It is your highness's own --look here !" with these words Scotus touched the spring in the back of the miniature ; and there, in a lock of Agnes's hair, was evident the initials of her name ingeniously intertwined with those of Ghebhard Truchses, in gold-twisted wire.

" 'Tis wondrous strange !" said the elector,

taking the portrait. He gazed on it awhile ; then placed it in his bosom ; and after a few words more, retired.

We need scarcely add that Scotus himself was the old woman who preceded, so fortunately for his own plans, the visit of the elector to Karl Kreutzer's lodge. And it will be as easily divined that the picture of Agnes was obtained among Duchess Anne's precious trinkets ; and that the Italian's ingenious fingers had worked the wire-drawn initials together, in the interval of his retiring from the dinner-party, and his going out at night-fall to leave the second billet for his unfortunate victim. The bustle in the palace, and the passing to and fro of his attendants with luggage, books, &c. allowed him to slip out and return unobserved, by the aid of ready-made master-keys, with which he opened at will the garden-gates, as well as those of the mansion itself.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE supper party, so anxiously looked for, took place. The expectations of those who reckoned on it as a kind of touchstone to their hopes and their designs were more than fulfilled. Ghebhard Truchses was satisfied that he had found, for the first time in his life, a woman, whose beauty, manners, and mind were all on a par of lofty elegance, yet whose pride was without arrogance, whose vivacity without conceit, and whose modesty without meanness. Thus far one long evening of familiar intercourse enabled our hero unerringly to judge. There was an open dignity on the very surface of Agnes's demeanour, which might be read like

an unclasped volume. Truchses did not pretend to divine at once the secret springs of her character. In fact his thoughts did not dive so deeply. Who for the first time in society with the being whose attractions captivate his heart, dreams of fathoming the silent channels of her's? These are the subjects for after-thought. To imagine an immediate inquest into them is to suppose an influence which no woman excites at first sight, because no man believes himself to be at once in love, and nothing else would justify or even suggest such profound inquiry. It is when, after repeated meetings, the lover feels himself enthralled, that he commences an examination which reason tells him to be necessary to his future happiness. But then it is too late. His mind has lost its analyzing power. It is imbued with one colour—rose, as it has been fragrantly and fancifully called,—which tinctures everything, sometimes falsely, but still happily—for much that might check the ardour of a mere admirer is seen through pas-

sion's prism, in soft-blending hues of beauty. And, blessed construction of the human mind ! this is not merely for man's deception. For the mysterious action of love is double ; and while it makes the lover see perfection in defect, it often converts the faults of the beloved one into solid elements for mutual delight—exciting indolence, controlling vanity, and concentrating a thousand vapoury levities into one pure and chrystalized affection. And what unimagined faculties does not love's radiance bring to light ! But this is perhaps irrelevant—at least premature.

Ghebhard Truchses had sought this meeting with Agnes de Mansfeldt, prepared for its result. His imagination had been highly wrought. He knew he was approaching a rare specimen of female loveliness, and he came like an idolater to the altar of a long-worshipped divinity. He believed besides, or fancied he believed, that an agency more than mortal urged him on. And he was not left in solitude

with this inspiring abstraction. Scotus took care that the notion should not evaporate. The night of self-enchantment which Truchses passed alone was followed by a day of artful excitement, on the part of him whose influence he courted rather than repelled. His morning labours with his coadjutors of the conference, his dinner duties with those haughty guests, engaged without occupying his mind, and irritated a spirit impatient of control and impetuous in action. Every hour that brought him nearer to the one he yearned for, was like those which lead a captive to enlargement. And, like him who sees through prison bars the open fields of freedom, he exaggerated the enjoyments from which he was held back—if aught, indeed, *can* over-rate the charms of liberty or the enchantments of love.

Agnes, in her turn, felt the whole force of the impulsion which had hurried on her enthusiastic admirer. His animation, his energy, his brilliant display of dress and ornament, the

flush of excitement in his tone and on his features, his varied knowledge, brought into play through many channels of wit and eloquence, the flattery of his looks and manner, rather than his words, formed a combination that few women would be able, fewer still desirous, to resist. Agnes acknowledged to herself that she had never met a man of such brilliant manners; yet she was as unconscious of the power of her own attractions in drawing him out, as are the magnet islands of romance, towards which some stately vessel hurries, on wings swifter than those of the wind.

But Agnes was not wholly unprepared for the impressions of this scene. She had heard much of the Elector-archbishop of Cologne. The passing view in which she saw him the previous day, the evident attentions he gave to the group of which she formed one, the allusions of Emma, and the characteristic hints of Ulrick had all had their effect. His glowing manner now carried her along with him, in a rapid flow

of animated discourse. He sat by her side at supper ; and when the repast was finished he attached himself to her, as if unconsciously, in the saloon to which the party withdrew. The lead in conversation was ceded to him by all present, in right of his talents rather than his rank, so as to obviate the air of arrogant superiority which is most odious when it seems sanctified by high station. Truchses more than most men blended familiarity with dignity—because he affected it less than most. The happy manner which reaches, without straining for, the level of high breeding is a gift, a talent that may not be taught, any more than an ear for music or an eye for painting. Our hero had it in perfection. And the consequence was that every one was at ease with him—not because he strove to put them so, but because he made no effort, either for their sake or his own. Nothing is more vain than the labours of the posture-masters of society, whose contortions of condescension completely embarrass those who

may be supposed to want their encouragement. It is awkwardness of mind which causes a warped manner; and no twisting can ever set either straight.

Agnes had seen high society from her childhood up. But in the tone of that semi-chivalrous age there was a rudeness that revolted her; why, she scarcely knew, for it was an instinct of refinement that raised her above the level of her country's manners. Chivalry was then on the wane. Religious strife had roused a deeper tone in the mind of Europe, and particularly throughout Germany. War was now waged on more solemn inspirations than those of gallantry; and champions of "the faith" scorned the suavity of their predecessors. Churchmen and statesmen, on the other hand, were stern in principle and rigid in manners. Agnes's domestic circle formed no exception to the prevalent tone. The ardent elegance of Ghebhard Truchses was, therefore, something new to her; and as her memory hastily

recalled the most distinguished courtiers of Saxony, and the many strangers of note who had appeared there at intervals, she mentally gave the palm to the accomplished personage with whom fate had now thus thrown her into contact.

Agnes de Mansfeldt possessed a certain peculiarity of taste, more common with young women than may be obvious to those shallow slanderers, who ascribe to some vitiated or sordid motive whatever may appear an aberration from the beaten track of female commonplace. She had ever preferred the society of men of middle-age to that of the youthful danglers of the elector's court. She had observed in those latter pretension overpowering desert, and selfishness stifling decorum, in a degree not to be met with in those who had seen more of the world, and made it a study instead of a sport. With greater information and less levity, she found that the latter had more skill in concealing their faults; and she,

who had formed no attachment of the heart, knew not as yet the delight of finding excuses for the errors of those one loves.

Such was the fact with regard to Agnes. She had never received any serious impression from her various suitors. Her affections were wholly disengaged. Several circumstances, one of a very peculiar character, had led her to consider herself out of the possible reach of any attachment that might lead to marriage. And any other never came within the scope of her imagining. Her intercourse with the other sex had, therefore, been at all times free from the restraints which embarrass young women who look to a wedded establishment in life. She was neither afraid of herself nor of the men she so unreservedly listened to ; nor—what is still more terrible to a sensitive and delicate mind—of the voice of scandal misinterpreting her conduct.

This absence of embarrassment is the great charm of women, when not degenerating into

frivolity. The loveliest fail to captivate when evidently acting or studying a part. And, with such a person as Truchses, Agnes's manner was so utterly unrestrained that her various attractions had most ample play. His rank was no cause of reserve to her, who had been ever used to hold herself on a level with princes ; and his *profession* never obtruded itself, but in those passing reflections which made her think it a pity, that one so calculated for every *lay* blessing should be as much debarred as she considered *herself* to be from the greatest of all. But this thought never came reflected, as it were, from any image of her own situation. If her destiny was, even in this early stage, blended, either in fancy or reality, with that of Ghebhard Truchses, she was at any rate unconscious of it.

During this memorable evening, Jerome Scotus played but the minor part of an observer. He made himself in no way prominent, except by assiduous efforts to leave the prin-

cipal personages in the scene as much and as uninterruptedly as possible together. He took care to amuse and occupy the whole family of Kriechlingen, father, daughters, and nephew. His various arts to this effect were closely attended to by Count Nuenar, who watched all that was going on, in his usually keen and unimpassioned way. The persons mentioned composed the whole company. The baroness was, as usual, confined to her private apartment, where old Spangenberg kept her company, partook of her frugal repast, and duly read her to sleep, before he retired to his early couch. The Duchess of Saxe-Coburg did not appear at either board for supper. Under the excuse of indisposition—for she had in truth recovered from the sudden attack of the previous day—she wholly absented herself, and kept strictly to her own chamber.

It may be supposed that Agnes's curiosity had been greatly excited with respect to Scotus. But it must be remembered that her friend's

confidence had only gone the length of a vague and general accusal of him. Agnes was wholly ignorant of his nefarious conduct respecting the jewels; and she could not help making some allowance in his favour (on the score of Duchess Anne's enthusiastic, and consequently exag-
erative, turn of mind) when she saw his footing with the elector, and heard such testimonials as were bestowed by the baron, and more par-
ticularly by young Leckenstein, on his prodi-
gious knowledge and various acquirements.
His bearing towards herself during the whole evening was such as to weaken in a great mea-
sure her previous prejudice against him. No-
thing could be more decorous and respectful,
and at the same time less fawning or obtrusive.
The impression was altogether in his favour.
The high consideration in which he was evi-
dently held by the elector was, in spite of her,
almost enough to outweigh all that she had
heard. But, in fact, she scarcely observed or
thought of him at all after the first hour. He

seemed but as a shadow, depending on that brilliant substance of talent and accomplishments after which he moved. Little did Agnes know of the exulting joy with which he marked the progress of events. Scotus saw clearly that his game was now in his own hands.

We abstain from entering into a detail of the conversation of that evening. Important as it was, as the opening of a long period of vicissitudes in the career of two gifted individuals, it nevertheless failed to bring out any of those salient emotions of the heart, those gushing springs of sentiment which leap at times through the surface of social intercourse, like the live waters bounding from a mountain's breast. The whole of that evening was like a glow of sunshine, the atoms of which might not be separated from the bright and genial whole. The beings thus brought together were like enchanted creatures, walking in fairy-land, through bloom and fragrance, moved by some soft impulse, scarcely felt and not to be defined. Yet in neither did

it produce that languid inanity which sinks to sleep in enjoyment's lap. It awoke in both a feeling of mature delight, which Agnes had not even imagined, and which Truchses had only dreamed of, as some far-distant and apochryphal paradise, the ways of which he was not destined to explore.

A whole month passed on. How many readers will applaud our abstaining from an attempt to trace the minute progress of the passion, the germs of which had been so early developed ! We have faintly sketched the dawn of the bright day. But the many-shifting hues that light love's heaven when the sun of passion rushes up, defy the boldest pencil and baffle the keenest gaze. It is enough to state that the impassioned elector was deep, deep in love. Once more ! but with sensations wholly different from those of any previous attachment. So different that this new modification of his ruling passion appeared to him one totally distinct. It must be confessed that in his fre-

quent amours he had never had other than sensual designs. The monstrous institutions of the church to which he belonged having, in its unequal war against nature, forced the priesthood into libertinism, it chose to slur over the offence rather than obviate the temptation. Truchses felt that love was a necessity of his heart. From its legitimate raptures he was, as a priest, debarred. His station as a prince, gave unbounded scope to its illicit indulgence. Woman had been to him therefore a pursuit—but never a prey. He was too proud to have recourse to any vulgar influence of power; too generous to feel concession in any case a triumph. He was at once the most impassioned in sueing and most humble in success. If he was driven out of the path of virtue, he never at least trod that of dishonour; and he threw a delicacy into intrigue which made it more dangerous than open vice.

Agnes de Mansfeldt produced an effect on him which he had never before known. None

of the elements of what he had previously believed to be love seemed mixed with his new feelings. He had not to combat any violent desires. He had no war to wage against dishonouring thoughts. Not one rose up in reference to her. He was as though transplanted to an atmosphere pure, calm, warm, and bright, free from extremes and accidental agitation, where an eternal sunshine lighted an undying spring, and serenity was buoyant rather than voluptuous. The days flew rapidly, but not too fast. It is only when we have some object to gain, or some phantom to pursue, that time appears unseasonably rapid. But Truchses' existence now was as an undefined dream. He asked for nothing but to be with Agnes. When with her he thought of nought besides. When absent from her he felt as joined to her by some subtle link of sympathy. He could not analyze it. Who could? Yet who has not felt the chain—as light as gossamer, yet stronger than iron fetters?

And so, Ghebhard Truchses was now really in love—and for the first time, at seven-and-thirty years of age ! This may appear a startling assertion after all we have confessed for him. But the glowing fancy of boyhood, commonly called first love, is by no means of necessity *it*. Many such flickering lights usurp the title that belongs only to that steady flame which may be awakened long after *they* have run their meteor course. Those impetuous fancies of early youth are easily distinguished from *it*. For it is energetic without violence, passionate without coarseness, tender without mawkishness, and confident without audacity. And can he who has felt such a passion, and known the ecstacy of its being returned, ever forget one circumstance of his bliss ? No, no ! The chilling influences of time and absence may congeal all other feelings. But they preserve, while they strengthen, the one passion shrined in his heart—like the condensed essence unfrozen in the centre of a flask, though surrounded

by ice formed of the wine's less ardent elements.

During this first month of Ghebhard Truchses' regeneration, all custom of his former life was in complete abeyance, all notions of business paralyzed, all ambition, jealousy, and vain glory dead. The affairs of the congress were totally unheeded. His own concerns unthought of. The intrigues of the former were left to his rivals ; the cares of the latter to his friends. Nuenar, Kriechlingen, and some others laboured hard to uphold him in the estimation of the citizens and the chapter. But he had no one to plead his cause against those envious coadjutors, named by the emperor to negotiate with him in the congress, or to stand his friend against the torrent of plausible complaint consequent on his neglect of the high duties entrusted to his charge. He made one or two efforts to rouse into a watchfulness of the trust he knew himself to be forsaking. But the chicaneries of diplomacy threw him back in disgust ; and after

awhile he gave up his official responsibilities, even in thought. Every day saw him early at Kriechlingen House. Every night brought him late to his palace. While at the former, it seemed to him as though an angel beamed on him, attended but not rivalled by her three seraph friends. When at home he had always a domestic devil, feeding with forbidden fruit, and whispering unceasing flatteries into his too ready ear. Scotus never allowed him any respite from the glosing wiles by which he smoothed his path to ruin. To ruin? was it not the Italian's interest to keep him powerful and great? Patience, good reader.

Of Agnes, her feelings, and her occupations, during this month of exquisite monotony we have little to record. The chapter of her life had opened at a new page, and fate was about to write in it in characters acutely legible. But she was a passive agent in her own destiny. She received the elector's visits—not ostensibly paid to her—she walked with him in the garden,

she conversed with him in the saloon ; and she sang to him, while he gazed and listened as though sight and hearing formed but one sense ; she watched him while he read, as though her eyes took in the author's meaning more through the eloquent expressions of the reader's features than through the inspiring words which caused their play. And thus the time ran on ; the Duchess of Saxe-Coburg and the two sisters playing subordinate parts in the oft-repeated scene, and the former agitated by a host of emotion, growing and shifting from day to day, to a crisis of intensity which, with its causes, will be explained in the proper place.

CHAPTER IX.

MAY was now ripening to maturity, and lending its influence to the growth of all bright things and all good feelings. The sensation, which we have just striven to describe came clearly within this latter category, and sudden circumstances soon completed what the regular march of Time would have been long in bringing to pass.

The fine weather and the verdant charms of the open country irresistibly invited abroad those whose sympathy with nature's beauties was increased by the isolation which might be thought to have checked it. For several weeks the female inhabitants of Kriechlingen House

had scarcely left the precincts of its gardens. Duchess Anne was restrained to those limits, and even to their infrequent enjoyment, by the mysterious slavery on the tenure of which her existence seemed to hang. Agnes had had no wish to pass them, and her influence on her young hostesses was such as to lead them to yield up to her inclinations for retirement even those tastes which urged so many into the scenes of public entertainment which abounded during the continuance of the congress. But the sisters had other causes, of strictly personal concern, for this temporary seclusion from the busy world. Fredolinda, with too sensitive acuteness, had quickly observed the fascination which the Duchess of Saxe-Coburg involuntarily began to exercise over her cousin Ulrick. Jealousy soon springs up, a weed by the side of love, in the warm heart that is joined with a weak mind; and when once that fiend creeps into paradise the fruit of knowledge turns to deadly poison. Poor Freda found the truth of

this, in the rapid pang which struck on her so lately happy heart; and her indolent enthusiasm, thus checked, soon turned to brooding discontent. She made no complaint—sought no consolation—kept her anxiety to herself—and sighed and wept in silence.

Emma, late so unfixed and laughter-loving, had also shown a change of manner, if not quite of character. An air of importance was taking place of her levity, and rising above that childish nothingness which she was used to affect and seem proud of. Home and its noiseless occupations seemed all at once to bound her desires, as though she had forgotten all the balls and concerts and assemblies, on the anticipation of which her fancy had so long fed. And what caused this marvellous change—for better for worse—in this young person? not love nor jealousy, certainly, but an awakened sense of self-consequence—from what arising? From the marked and unceasing attentions of Scotus, who was to Emma the most extraordi-

nary, and of course in her notion, the most interesting person she had ever met.

It is scarcely necessary to explain the motives which fixed this arch villain's designs on this pretty and innocent girl. To keep her out of the way of interfering with the elector's attentions to Agnes, was his early inducement for amusing her by tricks of legerdemain and light arts of conversation ; and her evident pleasure in his skill led him on to deeper projects, which grew readily with slight encouragement. In all his visits with the elector, he devoted himself to her ; and her gratified vanity met his attentions at least half way.

One feature in the social arrangements of Kriechlingen House was the absence of Duchess Anne from the circle, whenever Jerome Scotus was of it. Whether this happened by accident or intention was known but to Agnes. The sisters grew gradually too busy with their own thoughts to lavish much attention on the reserved conduct of their high-born guest, who

was left, as much as she wished, alone with her private attendants.

But at length a day arrived, breaking this monotonous round of seclusion; fixed on by Ghébhard Truchses himself for a party which was meant to be merely one of pleasure, but which was destined to bring into play some of the deeper and most delicate springs of passion. The electoral palace of Bruhl, the favourite residence of its princely occupant, was the scene of the excursion; and arrangements were made under his directions, to combine all that was elegant and attractive consistent with the strict privacy of the plan. The persons included were the elector, Nuenar, young Leckenstein, Scotus, and the *four* female friends—for Duchess Anne announced, with an assenting smile, which few would have believed deceptive, that she was happy to make one. To Walram, the elector's confidential valet, was confided the care of the preparations previously ordered. The party were to set out imme-

dimately after sunrise, in two carriages ; one to contain the elector, the duchess, Agnes and Scotus, the other the two sisters, with Count Nuenar and Ulrick. Not a single officer of the elector's household, those usually indispensable appurtenances of his state, was permitted to intrude, and barely domestics enough attended to watch after the wants of the party.

It is needless to describe the different gradations of feeling, from delight to despondency, with which this excursion was looked forward to by the majority of the eight individuals just named ; or to point out the exceptions to such, in those who considered the thing in a cold and calculating aspect. But of all the party, there was certainly not one who felt so thorough a sense of enjoyment as our heroine. The sensations in which she revelled were probably the happiest she had ever known ; and because they had no direct object, no palpable design. Anxiety, with all its demon train, is sure to accompany the mind that looks even to the

consummation of its happiest conceptions. But Agnes had no fixed purpose in view, only one general impulse of enjoyment pervading her mind and body both, and giving to each a buoyant elasticity, the very heaven of innocent sensation.

Ere the sun rose high enough over the summits of the seven mountains to look down on his own image in the quivering undulations of the Rhine, Agnes had viewed her beaming face and quickly-attired person in her mirror's imperfect reflection. She involuntarily smiled at her own beauty, and her breast bounded in an instinctive sentiment of happiness. But she could not enjoy herself alone. Self-admiration and self-content always call for sympathy. It is only the self-despising and dissatisfied that are unsocial. Agnes wanted to show herself to, and to talk with, some one who both admired and loved her; and knowing that the day-break orisons of her venerable tutor were by this time far on their road to Heaven,

she resolved to surprise him by a visit that might gently lead his thoughts earthwards again. She crossed the corridor with tip-toe buoyancy, and tapped at old Spangenberg's door. The murmurs of his voice caught her ear.

"Ah, still at prayer!" thought she. "So much the better. His blessing will be blended with thanksgiving, and my vanity be tempered by his devotion."

She opened the door softly; but had only half entered when she started back, on seeing the figure of a man sitting beside the reverend pastor, his body bent, in evidence of close attention to the words of the speaker. Had this new comer been a stranger, Agnes would, of course, have retired. Had the person whom she saw and instantly recognised, though his face was turned from her, so burst upon her unexpectedly a short month before, she had rapturously rushed into his arms. Now she stood as though spell-bound; and the current

of her veins shrank freezing back to its throbbing reservoir.

The person whose appearance had wrought this change on our heroine turned round and perceived her as she stood.

“ Ha! Agnes!” cried he, rising from his seat and advancing towards her. But as if struck by her confused and almost terrified looks, he stopped short, and added, in a tone of severe reproach, “ What! *listening!*”

This latter word was really the only one that Agnes heard. Its sound brought her to herself.

“ Listening!” repeated she, and the blood rushed from her heart again, suffusing her cheeks and brow. “ If your sudden appearance surprised me Ernest, I am shocked by your hasty words. I thought you knew me better!”

“ I thought so too, my sister—but a month produces mighty changes at times. Pardon me, however; it *was* a hasty word. Thou wilt forgive it surely? Thou wert

never of an ungenerous mood, and least of all to me."

All this was true ; and Agnes felt her resentment expire under the breath of the apology. But that self-formed tact which springs from the necessity of deceit, taught her to feign an anger even greater than she had for a moment felt. She made no reply to her brother's appeal ; and as he advanced, with open arms and penitent look, she shrank back and turned her head away.

" Why, how is this ?" resumed Ernest
" This is not nature's doing, Agnes. Either thou *didst* listen at the door, and thus looked guilt at my reproach, or some powerful feeling worked within thee, to show such unquiet signs at my unlooked for, my *unwelcome* visit."

Agnes was now really piqued by these taunts. But hypocrisy was still at work ! Fearing to over-act her part, she suppressed what she had erewhile assumed ; and in the short space of a few minutes she performed a more varied series

of deception than she had ever been guilty of in the course of as many years. At every step she felt humiliated and confused. She had yet to learn the pleasure and the pride of concealment, as regards emotions whose chief value is secrecy, and to which betrayal is little less than death.

“ Ernest,” said she with somewhat recovered serenity, “ this is a strange meeting for those who parted as we did, who have lived so long in love and confidence together, who have pledged such vows as bind us to each other. How is this? Whence come you? and why are you here abruptly, to take me, as it would seem, by surprise, to load me with reproach, and to provoke retort—is this the way in which we ought to meet?”

“ No, Agnes, no! It is not so the Count of Mansfeldt should find his sister. But ask *me* not why it is so. Turn your inquiries inwards. Your own heart must answer. Mine is this moment choked with grief and anger—I tell

you so at once. The vow you have invoked is broken—in thought if not in deed. Our solemn pact is violated—there is no faith in you !”

These words were uttered with violent emphasis. The speaker showed a terrible reality of agitation. His pale cheeks and lips compressed conveyed an expression of sentiment as sorrowful as language could do. Agnes trembled inwardly; but no visible weakness betrayed her.

“ Is it not so ?” continued the brother, “ speak ! are not my reproaches just ? Have I not good right to feel and to act thus ?”

“ No,” replied Agnes, firmly.

“ No !” echoed he, “ canst thou, then, be so quickly sunk in shame as to deny it ? By Heavens, then, I will seek elsewhere for the confession, even in the throne-room of thy princely paramour ! This instant too—the honour of our race impels me.”

“ The madness of your brain !” exclaimed Agnes, laying her hand firmly on his arm, as

he attempted to rush past her. The tone in which she spoke affected him more than the gesture. He stopped and looked full in her face. He read there a whole volume of indignant energy and virtuous agitation.

“ Yes,” continued she, “ madness alone could prompt this outrage, to me, yourself, and our whole line, undishonoured until now by these foul words. No, Ernest, you shall not pass me. Here you must stay till you amply unfold the meaning of your bold and boisterous slander. And well it is that our venerable friend is present at this scene, which no one could credit on my unwitnessed word. Good pastor, will you explain this abrupt arrival, this cruel treatment, and if you know it the cause of such wild change in him who is my brother born, and the sworn guardian of the honour he now dares to impugn.”

“ By Heavens, I marvel at thee, Agnes!” cried the brother, gazing at her, his arms folded and his attitude fixed, as she rushed to-

wards old Spangenberg, who had remained silent in his large chair during the rapid scene. “ I marvel at thy beauty and thy boldness both. Some magic has been done with thee. Nought else could, in the short space since our last parting, have added to thy charms or changed thy temper so. Can this be the meek, the placid canoness of Gerrisheim? The open-minded, honest daughter of De Mansfeldt? Ah, Agnes, increased development of beauty is dearly paid for by a change of character and a sacrifice of principle !”

A flush spread broadly on Agnes’s face. It was mixed up of vanity and shame. Pride or resentment did not this time mingle in the dye. The pleasant flattery and the deep reproach fell on a conscious mind—and *told*. She burst into tears, not wholly bitter. She saw love in her brother’s look, and heard sorrow in his voice, and their combined appeal was irresistible.

“ Ah, dearest Agnes, my more than sister,” exclaimed he, passing his arm round her and

pressing her towards him, “ how must I interpret this emotion ? Is it remorse—is it a return to old, genuine feeling—is it affection so long perverted and frozen in thy heart—now unprisoned in a gushing thaw ? Speak to me, Agnes, and set me at rest, for thou hast caused me much misery.”

“ Supposing that I had, Ernest, you seem disposed to pay it back,” said she, “ but I have caused you none. You wrong me. Some fantasy possesses your brain. Why will you not explain this cruel mystery ?”

“ Well, then, I will explain, if still thou art resolved to seem ignorant. I at least will be frank. Whatever betides, it shall not be my fault.”

With these words, Ernest de Mansfeldt led his sister forward and closed the door. He then addressed Spangenberg.

“ Kind pastor, your love for our house and for us will pardon my begging the use of this chamber for a brief space, will it not ?”

“ Yea, yea, my children. I will retire to my sleeping-room and leave ye to yourselves. He who has for half a century shared the castle of a noble prince, may well yield his anti-room for half an hour to his patron’s children.”

“ Now we are alone, Agnes, left to ourselves, but are we ourselves again? Has my presence broken the spell which drove me from thy heart and made thee other than thou wert? Are the feelings of this letter still thy feelings? Oh, what a mighty influence must have been at work to have ever made them thine! Look here—is not concealment now worse than criminal, is it not vain?”

Agnes’s eyes glanced rapidly over the letter which her brother held towards her as he spoke. It was half open, and she thought she saw her own hand-writing. She read a few words. She knew they were not her’s. She blushed and trembled. Her brother’s eye was fixed sternly on her. She met his stare by a quick and steady gaze.

" Ernest, you are imposed on. This is a piece of jugglery. I never wrote that letter."

" Canst thou deny thine own hand-writing?"

" Dare you accuse me of such words as those? For shame, for shame, my brother! Where was your Mansfeldt blood—your manly sense—your honest confidence? Perish the vile scrawl, and with it your more vile suspicions!"

This appeal was irresistible. The brother, convinced, confounded, repentant and indignant, examined word by word the false document with her whose sentiments it blasphemed. It was a letter to the address of the elector-archbishop, breathing confessions of unseemly boldness, and couched in language too unequivocal for doubt. The hand-writing was so like that of Agnes that no difference could have been told between the real and the false. The cover was endorsed with the words "From my beloved one," and the initials G. T. were affixed. Agnes had seen the elector's writing—aye and received some of it, in light notes of courtesy

and complimentary verses, for Ghebhard wove couplets and paid compliments at times.

“ So, then, I have wronged thee, Agnes ! But the atonement will cost dear to this mitred profligate, who has forged thy name and would blast thy reputation. This hour shall see thee revenged.”

“ Hold, Ernest, hold ! you are wrong in all ways. His highness the elector could not do any act of baseness.”

“ What ! wouldst thou—”

“ Nay, nay, my brother, cease this impetuous obstinacy. I know the forger of the letter and of the elector’s signature. His motive I cannot divine.”

“ Tell me his name instantly.”

“ No, Ernest. This unwonted violence is of bad augur for the calm consideration of a case like this. His highness’s name involved, his honour trifled with, we must proceed with the utmost delicacy.”

“ And thy name, Agnes, thine honour ! art

they as nought? art thou so absorbed by considerations for this libertine prelate that thou thinkest of him alone? Good sister, we quit Cologne together to-day."

"To-day!"

"Aye, Agnes. That start, that emphasis, that palor—and now that flush all add force to my resolve and speed to its execution. Prepare for our journey home."

Such had been the tone of authority at all times usual to Count Ernest de Mansfeldt in his conduct to his sister. She had always submitted to it as a thing of course. She had never questioned the dictation; but yielded, from habit and want of a motive for resistance, a common case even with strong minds domineered over by weak ones. But *now* a great change had taken place in the character of Agnes. Why, she knew not yet, for she was not conscious of the influence which love was working in her. But no dictation save that of the mighty passion now for the first time deve-

loped had evermore a chance of ruling her. She had been shocked by her brother's abrupt order for departure, but by no means shaken.

"I cannot possibly leave Cologne to-day, except for an excursion, already fixed on, to the elector's country palace at Bruhl," said Agnes, in a tone of most unusual decision.

"Indeed!" exclaimed her brother. "Are then my suggestions (he would have said *orders*) of no weight with my sister?"

"Not when balanced against the deference owing to a sovereign prince, and the courtesy to my dear friend the Duchess of Coburg and my kind relatives and hostesses."

"Then *I* shall make one of this party; or, without me, you, Agnes, shall not be of it."

"Of it I shall be most assuredly, kind brother; and I know that the arrangements render it impossible that you can find a place."

Ernest looked and felt astounded, as these words so calm and so decided fell upon his ear. He had tact enough to observe that his empire

was overthrown ; but, quite taken by surprise, he wanted courage for a vigorous attempt to replace it. His instant and only resource was a cunning subserviency—that instinct which holds with common men the place of bold sagacity in great ones, and for which success too often gains the meed that the latter alone should procure.

“ Well, Agnes,” said he, “ I must not contest with thee this point of etiquette, or force my company on thee or thy friends. But, unless thou art prepared to throw off my guardianship altogether, thy visit to this dangerous place must come to a speedy close, for the sake of our common honour and our mutual happiness. And now reveal to me the name of him who has dared to counterfeit thy writing and compromise thy reputation.”

“ I have no doubt of Count Scotus being the base impostor.”

“ And who may he be—this count ?”

“ Who I know not, but he is the elector’s

guest—a false and dangerous one I had good reason to believe, even before this treachery. You shall know more of him, my brother, in due season—But now I must bid thee good morning, for the time of our departure is at hand. When I return at night we shall have much to tell, of what has passed during our month's separation."

"How often hast thou thought of me the while, Agnes?"

A blush of conscious change answered the implied reproach. But Agnes was at once an adept in her new character. She hurried over the difficulty thus thrown in her path. A smile, an embrace, a light, ambiguous phrase or two formed all the reply to Ernest's serious question. In a moment more he found himself alone; and Agnes soon joined her expectant friends, and with them was quickly borne from Kriechlingen House in the elector's carriage, which was, even before the time appointed, in waiting at the rendezvous.

As Ernest heard his sister's light leave-taking, marked her as she quitted the chamber with unembarrassed air, and then saw her leave the house and enter the carriage with all the ease of independence, he felt confounded. She, his long subservient creature—beloved 'twas true, but still at all times held in thraldom—so yielding heretofore, now all at once beyond control, how could the change have happened? What portion of the mystery was to be unraveled, and by whom? On what foundation was the forged epistle built? How far had this intercourse with the elector gone? These and a dozen more bewildering thoughts rushed across the anxious brother. To resolve his doubts was no easy matter. He had no acquaintance in Cologne but the old and almost doating pastor; and from the vague answers already given by Spangenberg to his rapid questionings he had little hope of any decisive information in that quarter. To it however he was obliged again to turn. And he quickly summoned the old

man to another conference, in which a few gleams of additional light were thrown on the domestic doings of the family in general, but which afforded no clue to the particular details of Agnes's new connexion, the absorbing subject of her brother's doubts and fears.

END OF VOL. I.

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